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NATURE AND SUPERNATURE

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NATURE AND SUPERNATURE

FROM EPIPHANY TO EASTER
AT ST. MARY'S, PADDINGTON GREEN

BY

A. L. LILLEY

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As the aim of a football-team is not merely to get the ball to a certain goal (if that were so, they would simply get up on some dark night and place it there), but to get it there by a fixed *machinery of conditions*—the game's rules and the opposing players; so the aim of God is not merely, let us say, to make men and to save them, but rather to get this done through the sole agency of Nature's vast machinery.—WILLIAM JAMES.

LONDON
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1911

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TO

M. D. PETRE

FROM WHOSE WRITINGS I HAVE LEARNED SO MUCH,
FROM WHOSE QUIET BOLDNESS IN THE FAITH
I HAVE STILL SO MUCH TO LEARN.

PREFATORY LETTER

DEAR MISS PETRE,

I would offer this book to you as to one from whom I have learned that the closed mind and the closed heart are the only things which are absolutely fatal to the life of religion. You no doubt have learned that truth, as we all must learn it, from many sources of knowledge and experience, but not least from the witness of the great seers of your own Communion. I remember those fine words of Bossuet in his sermon on the Profession of Mademoiselle de la Vallière :—" La connaissance est donnée pour entendre ce qu'il y a de plus vrai, comme l'amour est donné pour aimer ce qu'il y a de meilleur. Qu'est ce qu'il y a de plus vrai que Celui qui est la vérité même ? et qu'y a-t-il de meilleur que Celui qui est la bonté même ? L'âme est donc faite pour Dieu : c'est à lui qu'elle devait se tenir attachée, et comme suspendue, par sa connaissance et par son amour ; c'est ainsi qu'elle est l'image de Dieu." In these words of one of the greatest among the later Doctors of your Church I recognize something of the spirit of " Where Saints Have Trod " and " Catholicism and Independence." To their author, therefore, I offer these meditations which have sought the same inspiration, however little they may have succeeded in acquiring it.

I have called this book " Nature and Supernature " where I might perhaps have been expected

to call it "Nature and Spirit." Yet I have of set purpose avoided the latter title, as it seems to me to suggest a false and misleading antithesis. I have here thought of nature not only as that sub-human world which is to our seeming governed by a constant order of succession, but also as all in the human world which has acquired the same appearance of being fixed, constant, habitual. Now on any spiritual view of the universe, this nature is but spirit hardening itself, as it were, into habit that it may the better subserve the interests of its own fuller freedom. Spirit in the freedom of its perfect energy, spirit consciously seeking and battling for that freedom—the Divine Spirit, the Divinely-informed human spirit—I have called Supernature. The drama of the human soul consists in the relation between these two stages in the growth of spirit, between spirit as nature and spirit as supernature. Those relations are always of conflict, for each must fight for its life. But the higher can live only by utilising the lower, as the lower has no life save in being utilised by the higher. Their conflict, therefore, is not of necessary and inveterate enemies, but of the constant elements in a living process. Every fresh victory of free spirit means the reduction of another layer, as it were, of itself to the plane of habit where it can live only by becoming the instrument of a still further victory of its own free energy, but where, alas! it may also be satisfied to sink into the inertness and unserviceableness of death. Traditional Christian theology has been magnificently right in representing the Great

Enemy of human souls as spiritual being. It has not been so right, as it seems to me, in conceiving of the lower stages of spirit as the enemy only, and necessarily, of the higher.

"A religion that is not founded in nature," said William Law, "is all fiction and falsity, and as mere a nothing as an idol. For as no creature can be, or have anything in it, but what it is and has from the nature of things, nor have anything done to it, good or harm, but according to the unalterable workings of nature; so no religion can be of any service but that which works with and according to the demands of nature. Nor can any fallen creature be raised out of its fallen state, even by the omnipotence of God, but according to the nature of things, or the unchangeable powers of nature; for nature is the opening and manifestation of the divine omnipotence; it is God's Power-world: and therefore all that God doth is and must be done in and by the powers of nature."

This book is but a series of meditations on the growth of spirit considered from the point of view which I have here indicated. However imperfect their form and their substance, I will cherish the hope that you may sympathise with their spirit and their aim. It is in that hope that I venture to dedicate them to you.

Your sincere and grateful friend,

A. L. LILLEY.

All Saints' Day, 1910.

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The Gifts of Epiphany

"When they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts: gold and frankincense and myrrh."—*St. Matthew ii.* 11.

The Gifts of Epiphany

I.—The Gift of Gold

Among the legends which grew up about the childhood of our Lord there is none more beautiful or charged with a fuller measure of ideal truth than that of the Adoration of the Magi. By the ideal truth of a story I mean its correspondence with what ought to be, with God's purpose and design in the things that are. Now it is the privilege and distinction of the religious sense in man that to it something of this purpose is revealed, that it sees, however dimly, across the distorting mists of that imperfect which is something of that perfect which ought to be. What was, in the case of our Lord, we know only too well. He was put to death by those of His own nation, by those who had been trained by the prophetic tradition to expect the Messiah, whose most distinctive and consistent religious inspiration during the whole period of His life among them was just that expectation, because He claimed, or was supposed by them to have claimed, to be the King of the Jews. Those were the very terms of the accusation which was nailed in derision to His Cross. And, that the accusation might be proclaimed in the face of the whole contemporary world, it was written in Greek and in Latin and in Hebrew, in every language known to the men of that Mediterranean civilisation to which our Lord belonged.

Even to the Gentiles, whom the Jews despised with that fierce and proud contempt which only the sense of religious superiority can give, those same Jews thought it worth while to advertise their deliberate and judicial rejection of Him Who claimed to be their King. That, I say, is the fact of history. Yet only two generations later little groups of men throughout that same Gentile world had come to see that that was not at all the fact as God had seen and prepared it. They felt that the fact was that that life, ignominiously crushed and broken by the jealousy of Jewish orthodoxy, had been the fulfilment of the prophetic dreams of Israel in a far ampler measure than the greatest prophet of them all ever knew. From its very beginning, they felt, not only the Jewish but the Gentile world ought to have hailed it as the life of the destined deliverer, the deliverer, not merely of a nation from its temporary external oppressors, but of the whole race of man from its ceaseless internal confusion. And that vision of what ought to have been, of what, indeed, was already to the eyes of God, they wrought into the story of the adoration of the Child by the wisdom of the East. The power of the Life to draw the nations into its obedience, which only the history that grew out of that life could visibly declare, was ideally incorporated in a legend of the very beginnings of the historical life itself. And, indeed, that legend is not yet fulfilled. Its perfect truth of fact has still to await the consummation of the ages.

This morning let us think of one detail only of the story. The Gentile world, the world of common human life, has unpacked its treasures in the presence of the King that it may yield them up as the gifts which are due to Him. The gifts that it offers are of the things that were most prized in that Eastern world, of the things that it behoved the dutiful servant to offer to the master he would honour—the precious gold, the fragrant incense, the healing and comforting myrrh. They are symbols, those gifts, of all that man has to offer, of all that too often he desires to store up as treasure for his own enjoyment. For us gold is the symbol of all man's mastery of the earth and all its material results. We would keep it jealously stored up in our treasure-packs or draw it forth only to spend it still more jealously upon ourselves. And so long as we do either the one or the other, it belongs to that material order which must perish in the using. Only when we dedicate it to the Lord of Right, of Justice, to Whom it is due, does it increase with the using and become part of the treasure which neither moth nor rust can corrupt, which enters into life itself and will endure there when we no longer are. And let incense be for us the symbol of man's thought, of his agelong brooding upon the mystery of his being and of the nature in which he is. And that, too, may be among the treasures which we would jealously reserve to our own use and advantage. The activity of the mind may be self-centred and in the truest sense of the world materialistic.

And if it is so, it has baulked itself of the full measure of its usefulness. Only by offering itself to the Lord of Truth can it gain its share in the eternal order and minister fully to that life which is made for truth and most profoundly of truth. And again let the soothing myrrh stand for the activity of the heart, of all the affections that are hidden in life for its sweetness and purification. But that activity, too, will inevitably lose itself and become distorted into something altogether loathly and baneful if it remains content with the superficial enjoyment of the immediate feeling out of which it arises and in which it customarily dwells, and will not lift itself in patient and arduous self-offering to the Lord of Love. Let these three offerings then and their necessity to the fulness of our life be the subject of our Epiphany meditation.

And to-day let us think specially of the first of these gifts. We are made for action. It is in us to subdue the earth and to make it fruitful, to reduce its baffling disorder, its obstinate sluggishness, its lazy barrenness. It was a short-sighted vision which saw in that capacity and in the necessity which drives us to use it the primal curse of man. For that capacity inherent in us is man's primal equipment not only for the subjugation of nature, but in and through that subjugation for the full development also of his own spirit. And the necessity that first drove him and still drives him to use it was no external necessity whatsoever, but the internal necessity

of his own very constitution and nature. We were made to act. Will is the profoundest and most universal note of human life. To sit with folded hands content with things as they are, however good they may be, to refuse the urgent inner call to modify increasingly all that is without us, to repress through laziness or custom the instinct that tells us that the best we know can be bettered and that we are here to better it—that is somehow to fall short of even ordinary manhood. And in improving things, man has learned to grow himself. The reach of his spirit has enlarged. He has caught glimpses of a possible order within, which he would never have known if he had not had to fight for that order which he so persistently desired without. And as that vision of an inner order took shape and consistency, it gradually reacted even upon the outer order on which his will was set. Increasingly the order he desired in things became an order of right, of justice, of moral measure. There grew to be no permanent satisfaction for him in the most firmly established and enduring order which violated at any vital point the law of right as he had come to know it. And as that law was no rigid code of a human moment, but the increasing inspiration and revelation of an eternal Divine Life working within him, the scope of its claim widened for him with every age of his growth and forced him to seek both without and within an order to whose perfection no limits could be set. He was forced by the very necessity of his own being, by the

very law of its development—a law which, however often he suppressed it, would continually re-assert itself—to offer all the results of his active will to the Lord of Right on pain of their becoming the instruments of his destruction. He was forced to face the right as the only sufficient end of all his action on pain of his himself becoming its tragic and pitiable victim. He was forced to greet even the divine innocency of the Child as the Lord of Right, as the King of humanity, and to lay at its feet his golden treasure.

But, you will say, what fantastic idealism is this! What a self-deceiving glorification of the actual course of human history is this ideal, what a mutilating travesty of this ideal is the actual we know! I know it. That is just what I want to say. I, too, have been trying to see things as they ought visibly to be, as, too, in their innermost working—otherwise we cannot believe in God—they are always invisibly coming to be. Yet the actual is here, and it is the actual we must face in the interest of the ideal itself. And it was just that sturdy realisation of the crudeness of the concrete fact—a realisation so characteristic of all that was best in the Hebrew genius—that led the old Hebrew writer to speak of the necessity that drove man forth to conquer the earth as the primal curse. So, indeed, surely it would seem, for its most immediate result has been the lust of possession, a lust which has become fiercer in its impulse and more relentless in its temper with every fresh satisfaction it has compassed. Think

what this lust has accomplished, what it is accomplishing at this hour. It has permanently enslaved a large section of mankind by condemning it to an incessant routine of hard mechanical toil which leaves bare room for food and the heavy sleep the exhausted body demands, which, besides, often docks life of almost half its working years, and still more often leaves it on the labour scrap-heap to perish miserably through the slow, torturing grind of the aches and pains which are its only certain legacy to its victims. And another smaller section it has still more tragically liberated from every wholesome restraint and launched upon the pursuit and invention of the most degrading luxuries, of the most soulless pleasures, of the most frivolous and unhealthy amusements. Between these two sections, indeed, lies the vast body of sane humanity, a body whose numbers, I believe, are increasing in most of the industrial countries of the West with every generation. But even here how inadequate is our realisation of the great trust which God has committed to us in our capacity for action, in the irrepressible purpose of the human will! How inadequate our appreciation of the end it was all meant to serve! We may not, indeed, deny the immediate promptings of the heart to relieve the distress which our actual industrial system entails, in so far as that distress forces itself upon our individual attention. But we have hardly yet begun to realise it as an imperative social duty that we should organise the total industrial effort of the community in

the interest of the worthiest and completest life that is possible for each. Yet so alone can our industry be moralised and humanised. I do not wish to deny that the industrial use of private capital is the somewhat clumsy attempt of a particular stage of social development to turn accumulated wealth to social account. And I could not, if I wished, deny that that accumulation is due to the differences of will power and aptitude which characterise us as individuals. Yet there are other things which we must also remember—viz., the immense responsibilities and duties which devolve upon the few who by their superior skill in acquiring wealth control the lives and destinies of the many whom nature has less efficiently equipped. It is not wonderful, perhaps, if some of us are persuaded that the time has come for a large social control of those responsibilities and regulation of those duties. We want the differences which nature has really established in the constitution of human capacity to be respected, and not, as they often are, annulled by the mere decrees of fortune. Fortune, as Bossuet said two and a half centuries ago, is a word which the Christian minister ought to apologise for using when he speaks in the name of the God of justice. It is not a Christian word at all. Our whole effort as Christians ought to be to annul its fatal decrees, the decrees by which on the one hand it sterilises the most notable capacity, by which on the other it releases the most notable incapacity from the redeeming necessity of having to face life's real

hazards and difficulties. We do not want, no sensible man wants, an equal distribution of existing wealth. That would be to stereotype and universalise poverty, to sterilise effort, to rebuke and annul the capacity which creates by very virtue of its differences. But we do want to recover for each from the mutilating interference of what we call fortune the creative opportunity of turning to the best and most fruitful account that capacity with which nature has endowed him. To labour for such an end is to redeem and justify our wealth by offering it as an acceptable sacrifice to the Lord of Justice.

After all let us think of what it means that the earth is turned into fruitfulness by our efforts, that it becomes golden treasure at the magic touch of the human will. Can it on any showing mean that that fruitfulness can be mechanically distributed, that because it must pass according to any method of distribution in unequal and largely accidental measure into the possession of each, it is therefore committed irrevocably to the irresponsible, at least to the arbitrary, use of each? Is that a principle which can commend itself to us for a moment, I will not say as Christians, but as men? How little we need for our strictly personal use—wholesome food and decent shelter and healthy amusement and the due equipment for carrying on our special work—all but the last the commonest or the cheapest things that nature yields to our patient forcing of her hand. Well, outside those necessaries all that we have is due

to the Lord of the common right. And in offering it all to Him and to the execution of His beneficent designs in the world of men, we are truly offering Him also ourselves and all that we had to spend upon ourselves in equipping ourselves for His service. If, on the other hand, we fail to render it to Him, we are frustrating or at the least resisting the coming of His righteous society and ruining ourselves in a wanton self-indulgence.

II.—The Gift of Frankincense.

The history of man's thought is the real history of man. All fruitful action is profoundly rooted in thought. True, the roots may strike so deeply that there need be no conscious dependence upon them for the purpose of specific action. It is just when a tree has got secure and massive grip upon the soil that its growth becomes steadfast, uninterrupted, assured. It expands in all the dignity of apparently unimpeded effort. Yet there was a time when it was struggling for the mere right to exist, when its effort had to be spent in the relentless underground labour of driving its roots securely into the earth. Every branch flung out into the unknown spaces of the air was a venture mingled of forward-looking faith and backward-looking fear. Every tender leaf was at once a shrill shout of youthful victory and a quivering plaint of youthful timidity. Behind that confi-

dence which makes the young things of the spring woods so beautiful there lies always the anxious strain just to get rooted in the good, firm, trustworthy earth. And even when the tree has made its grip secure, its effort to exist is never so unimpeded as it seems. That effort must continue to be a victory, and a victory through which the tree is ever renewing and extending its hold on that which endures. Every member of the great forest tribe may expand with its air of stately unconsciousness all the summer through. But with the coming of winter at least it has to meet the assaults of a thousand enemies of storm and calm. And it is in that struggle with inexorable enemies that it has to prepare the renewal of its life. It has to wage incessant warfare with open violence or insidious treachery, with the raging breath or the gnawing tooth of the elements. And in that trial it learns how much its life depends upon that great underground warmth and strength in which it holds. There its work of self-renewal proceeds. With every storm that shakes and rends its visible life, its invisible is strengthening its grip. With every frost that bites and gashes its naked limbs, it hugs more lovingly and more tenaciously the warmth in which its roots inhere.

Is not this the parable of our human life? It is by the life of thought that we take conscious abiding hold of that unseen world in which we live and move and are. Our rootedness in it is indeed more ancient than all our conscious thought, more ancient than anything that is of our merely

conscious selves. Yet no picturing of that intimate enduring life in which we are rooted is at all adequate which does not present it as truth, the ultimate and eternal truth. And our conscious individual life has no higher measure of its worth, nay, of its very reality, than the extent to which it gains living hold upon that truth so that all its branches may be strong and beautiful and its fruit rich and satisfying. And though there may be times of spiritual prosperity, seasons of the spirit's almost unconscious expansion, there are also times when the spirit of man is called upon to renew its life underground through the very hostility of the forces that assail it from without. There are times when action can be nothing more than a fight for mere life, when life, indeed, has to face that sternest of all trials—the trial of enforced passivity. And then it is that the quality and the grip of our life's roots are put to the proof. Then it is that life will either be nobly renewed into a larger usefulness or ignobly convicted of its self-wrought futility.

It is in this sense, then, that the history of humanity is the history of the thought out of which all its action springs. Action is supremely important; yet its importance does not lie in its witness to itself, but in its witness to that without which it is meaningless or even absurd. It is the history of the roots that matters, for on that history depends absolutely the other history of all that shows above the surface, of all that can be measured by our human foot-rules. We are rooted in the

soil of eternal truth, and every branch and leaf and flower and fruit of human life has its value in its more or less fruitful transmutation of the elements of that soil. Each is meant to be an offering to the Lord of Truth. If it is not a conscious and a worthy offering to Him, it is self-condemned. There is something in us, however little heed we may too often give to it, that warns us that there is no greater blasphemy against our own nature than the insincerity which palters with truth or distorts it in some specialised interest, and no greater derogation from the dignity of our own nature than the intellectual despair which has abandoned the quest of truth or the intellectual apathy which has never even felt the need of seeking it.

And yet think of the ordinary activities of our minds. How little concerned we are with making them an offering to the God of Truth! They are dedicated instead to the service of every passing mood, of every accidental interest. Far from inspiring and steadying the will in its affirmation of that which eternally matters, the mind is too often satisfied to act as the shameless pander to the will's moods of wanton profligacy. Think for instance of what a wild orgy of self-seeking and self-assertion the world of modern business has become. Instead of being an associated effort of human wills to force a reluctant nature into yielding us its utilities, it has become the unblushing attempt of the strongest to monopolise those utilities and control them in their own individual

interest. And why, do you think, has such a monstrous defiance of the most elementary principles of human justice become possible? It is certainly not because men wanted to be unjust. It is simply because the whole business activity of man has grown up as an affair of blind and irrational haphazard. It has been wrought upon no constant ground of thought. Though the most necessary and indispensable of all human structures, it is a structure built upon no rock-foundation of reason. It has been run up anyhow on the sands of individual selfishness and greed. It is no wonder if such a structure of accident should be tottering to its inevitable fall. If man had but considered why and on what he was building, if the anxious strain of thought had inspired and directed all his energy, if he had realised, what the very word would have taught him, that wealth meant well-being and that the associated production of wealth had no other meaning and purpose than the social diffusion of well-being, then the industrial structure serving its true purpose need have feared no cataclysmic disaster. For every extension and enlargement of its mass would have been accompanied by that underpinning of its foundations on the rock-bed of justice which thought in its most general and most human form would have accomplished and alone could accomplish. That was the true function of thought, and for lack of it think what is happening at this present hour. We are in the midst of a revolution of which no man can see

the issue. The thought which might have worked fruitfully in constant and intimate alliance with life and the needs of its actual developments, has been forced into a detached attitude of crude theorising which faces the established order as its irreconcilable enemy and would build another in a dream-world which has but the vaguest relation with the conditions that must determine all human order. It is not the fault of thought that it has thus to work in the air. It is the fault of life, which in its blind folly has chosen in its most universal and essential activity to dispense, and with a note, too, of cynical contempt, with the aid of fundamental thought.

And yet it is not enough that in this matter we have not made of the uses of our mind an offering to God, to the Lord of Truth. There is worse behind. For we have made of them an offering to the devil, to the Lord of Untruth. Think of the degradation of man's intellectual faculty in the contemporary world of common business, in that use of our powers which ought of all others to bring out all that is most largely and broadly human in us just because it is the most universal and efficient medium of common service. Think of the gigantic abuse of brain-power which has gone to the transformation of common industry from the peaceful and considerate partnership which it ought to be into the cruel and truceless warfare which it is—the ever-extending ramifications of merciless underground intrigue, the shameless appeal to every baser instinct, the organised

deception, the lying or at the least grossly misleading advertisement, the development of bribery into a fine art. And the tragedy of it all is that the agents of this universal mischief are also its most pitiable victims. They are its victims because they do not suspect the mischief which they are working, or, if they do, have to harden themselves to perpetrate it on pain of going under. But as a rule they do not even suspect it. They have grown so accustomed to business on these terms that they have honestly come to disbelieve in its possibility on any other. They do not even suspect the need of a broad reconciling basis of thought for any activity which would be truly human.

And this moral disorganisation of the activity which is most universally and typically human has inevitably affected every other activity. I need not remind you how it has affected the lighter side of our life, its periods of relaxation, I can hardly say repose, its pleasures, its amusements, even its super-personal interests, its politics, its religion itself. A serious realisation of the meaning of all these things, of their bearing upon life, of the character which they ought to assume in order to contribute to its worthiness and nobility, is the last thing we look for and assuredly the rarest thing we are likely in our accustomed moods to find. Pleasure is either the most intoxicating excitement or the most potent anodyne, or more frequently both in one. The world of politics has appropriated every most sinister trick of the

world of business. The citizen is lashed into an irrational frenzy or harried and confused by contending exaggerations in order that he may discharge the duty which above all others demands the calm deliberation and untroubled decision of conscience. And religion has become on the one hand an insinuating sensuous appeal, on the other an overbearing, dogmatic assertion. It was once put to real proof when men worshipped God in the Catacombs, or when the Roman Mass was said through a whole century in caves on Irish hill-sides or later in the bare and ugly chapels which still dot the Irish countryside, or again when vast congregations of peasant folk assembled Sunday after Sunday in their primitive Scottish barns to lift up the rough sincerity of their exultant praise to the Eternal. But now it is barely kept alive by Westminster Cathedrals and musical services at St. Paul's, and by the dogmatic rebuke of every timid questioning of the reason in which each Church seeks to outbid the other.

All this is not faith. It is vital indifference or revolt or despair. It is indifference to the real meaning of life, or despair of attaining any knowledge of it, or vulgar revolt against all but its most obvious and individual import. No faith can exist which is not rooted in reason, in the unceasing effort of the mind to apprehend the import of life, and to exhibit in action and in every outward expression of our life that truth in which life itself is rooted. True, we shall never apprehend

it fully. Our hold upon it is always partial and always imperfect. But so long as our effort to gain hold upon it is real, patient, sincere, it purifies life, it brings us nearer to the God of Truth. Amid all the widespread spiritual defection of our time, there is one province of human effort in which this necessary devotion to truth is still signally displayed in all steadfast faithfulness. Need I say that I refer to the field of science? It is true that the results of that special quest of truth seem to many of us disappointing, indeed the express denial of that perfect truth in which we believe all partial truth inheres. But why, after all, should we deem them disappointing? They are professedly truths acquired in a partial field of enquiry, and since they are as assured as any truths can be, we whose belief is that all such truths are part of the perfect truth, ought to welcome them for the light they can throw upon its character. We must not shrink from the fact that they may compel us to modify the particular form under which we have been accustomed to present that ultimate truth to ourselves. All such modification is gain, not loss. For it is founded on a more real apprehension of reality where in its partial aspect we can apprehend it with something like adequacy. But quite apart from results I would point to the kind of character which the disinterested search for the truth we call science has evoked—simplicity, singleness of eye, indomitable patience in the self-dedication to an ideal end. Where these things are men are near to God, to the controlling

reality in things. The activity that calls these things forth is a veritable offering of ourselves to God.

And if our quest of truth is to be, as it ought to be, a fragrant incense ascending to the God of Truth from the altar of our human lives, there are two things we must always keep in remembrance. The first is that where thought must be by its conditions more or less speculative, as in philosophy and religion, we must always keep it in closest touch with the actual witness of life. And the second is that no action of man's can be worthy which is not rooted in a ground of continuous and increasing thought.

III.—The Gift of Myrrh.

To us who have been moulded by the long tradition of Christian life, God is supremely the God of Love. To have achieved that conception is in some sense to have reached the limit of man's power to picture to himself the nature of God. It is what makes it still possible for us to speak confidently of Christianity as the final religion. For love is the inclusive term of all other perfection. It is, for instance, the very spirit of justice or righteousness; just as, we feel sure, it is the secret heart of all reality, the controlling norm of all our knowledge of reality. It does not, indeed, follow that either truth or justice has been

consciously connected with love in their actual growth among men. The sense of justice has grown out of the very clash of selfish interests. It shared in the humble beginnings which pertain to all things human. Fear was its nursing-mother, and it laboured at its early lore in the hard school of a cautious prudence. No future was less likely for it than that of the justice whose ideal at least we cherish—the justice that works by love and for the sake of love. And again our quest of truth has led us in the past and still leads us to anything but the vision of a reality founded in love and directed by love. The more honest and disinterested that quest has been, the more disappointing sometimes its results have proved. Yet even here the most fundamental and the most permanent motive of the quest has been the hope of finding in the world an order which is at one with itself, which is guided by an inner harmony, which by a very necessity of its being must cherish every individual life that goes to its making. However much particular and isolated gains of truth may contradict that hope, man cannot relinquish it. His doubts and denials of it are never more than temporary. They prove in the end to be but doubts and denials of some particular form which it had assumed. That form may pass for ever, but its passing is but the signal and the preparation of its resurrection in a newer and more perfect form. And so as we unravel the long process of man's pursuit of truth, we grow more and more assured that the reality in and of

which we are must correspond with that desire of a reconciling order which is the profoundest need of our hearts and the compelling motive of all our thought.

But whatever we may think of the connection in time of these different perfections of man's activity—truth and justice and love—we are sure at least that love is the inclusive perfection of all human character. And we are still more sure that it is the perfection of the Divine character, that no higher way of conceiving that character is possible for us, that when we say "God is Love" we have reached the term of man's apprehension of the Divine. But have we thought further of what is implied in this certainty of ours? Emerging, perhaps hardly, from sterner conceptions of God, we turn with relief to this picturing of His nature so fully authorised by the evangelical witness itself. And I do not wish to deny that there is legitimate reason for the relief. We can trust a perfect love as we can trust nothing else in the world. We are sure that it at least cannot fail us, that whatever dread methods it may need to use with each it must somehow have an end of good for all. Yet let us think again. How can we answer this love of God? What return have we to offer it? If perfect love casteth out fear, an imperfect love ought to be its greatest occasion. It ought to be, because love is not love at all, it is not even an imperfect love, if it does not recoil in dread from its own imperfection, from its own powerlessness to give all that it desires to give

and feels it owes. The fear of enmity is a little thing, because it is so simple. It dreads only the might that is opposed to it. But the fear of love is immeasurable, because it is a fear of one's self, of one's utter unworthiness, of the sense that grows with love itself of powerlessness to become worthy. And so it is that when religion has become the definite recognition of God as Love, it has become more and not less exacting. Its exactingness is henceforward from within, the soul's own demand upon itself. It is a religion of the spirit, and no service can satisfy it save that which is in spirit and in truth—i.e., in voluntary and sincere self-dedication. For the Hebrew prophets God was above all else the God of Righteousness. It was possible to measure His service by conformity to a fixed and unalterable code of right. It was possible even to grow satisfied with the measure of one's obedience. And again for Christianity as interpreted through the Greek spirit God was pre-eminently the God of Truth. It was possible, even perhaps natural, to make obedience to Him dependent upon and almost synonymous with acceptance of a fixed form of belief conceived of as an adequate and unalterable statement of Divine truth. But conceive of God as Love, as the Lord of every movement of the inner life through which alone heart can be perfectly pledged to heart, and obedience to Him is beyond all measure that can be regulated from without. Its measure is henceforth dictated from within. Our lives may be outwardly obedient and even

serviceable to the law of right, and yet if there is any permanent motive within in conscious and continued revolt against that law, we know ourselves that we are unworthy. We do not need to be condemned, for we are forced by our own sincerity to condemn ourselves.

But there are still other reasons for the difficulty of any true service of the God of Love. All our ordinary activities are regulated by external conditions. There are definite things to be done, definite difficulties to be overcome, definite obstacles to be removed out of our path, definite ends to be achieved. We have to submit to a discipline in spite of ourselves, for such discipline is not only the condition, it is the very essence, of every human work. We cannot work in a spiritual vacuum. The very atmosphere which surrounds all honest productive human toil is an atmosphere which creates life and renews it. There is, alas! it must be admitted, in every complex human society much work which is wholly destructive and dissipatory. But even there the mere fact that it is a thing done, that it is the concentration of effort on a definite evil, provides that it may be brought to book, that it may be held up publicly to human judgment. It is possible to make such workers of mischief ashamed of their evil, and even where it seems impossible the fault lies somehow at our door. Our Lord at least had the secret of that power of convincing reproof which proceeded, not from the lips, but from the total effect of His life. And if it has largely passed

from the world, it is because we are His servants rather in name than in power. And again the use of the mind is a definite discipline. It keeps us in touch with reality or with some definite phase of reality. We know with something like accuracy when we are serving God through it and when we are turning it to evil and destructive account. But our whole emotional life much more easily escapes our judgment. It is so instinctive, so immediate, so overwhelming. It is no wonder that the old prophet could speak of the heart of man as deceitful beyond all things else. It is no wonder even that the greatest of Christian theologians distrusted the human heart so profoundly that he regarded every good thought and every movement of goodwill that proceeded from it as the result of an immediate miracle of divine grace overruling by an act of saving spiritual force its natural downward bent. It was not so much the positive evil of his own heart that alarmed St. Augustine as its utter confusion, its chaotic play of feeling, the inexplicable suddenness and tyranny of its movements. It is perfectly intelligible surely why all the early Christian teachers, when they wished to appeal to all that was best in man, appealed always to the reason and to the reason against the heart. They were appealing to the reflective against the instinctive, to the self as it turned back upon itself in judgment against the self as it was hurried on by the impetus of its own natural movement.

All this we must admit. It is an affirmation of

universal experience which none of us can escape. There is an evasiveness, an incalculableness, about our emotional life which must appal us. We know what we have done and what we aim at doing. We know or ought to know what we think and something of the character and effect of our thought. Thought and action are both of them the wholesome measurement of ourselves against reality. Reality is there to take its more or less immediate revenge upon them if they are unfaithful to it. But we never know fully what we are, and above all we never know what we may become. That was the discovery which St. Augustine had made out of his own bitter experience. All his religious teaching was but the utterance of that experience and the enforcement of its lessons as truths which none could afford to disregard. Naturally enough his teaching took the form of a radical condemnation of the human heart, of a fierce assertion of its inherent deceitfulness and powerlessness for good. And inevitably his followers hardened this fact of experience into a hard and repellent dogma. I say inevitably, because it is the fate of all human experience to be thus degraded when it ceases to be immediate and becomes merely derivative. But however true and however universally valid the experience of St. Augustine was, we must face it as our own experience if we are to extract from it the measure of its truth for us. And we shall find, I think, that a great change has been wrought in our conception of the part which the emotions play in the total

economy of our life. We no longer despair of gaining some kind of effective control over them, of reducing them to an order which we can in some measure trust and utilise. We are sure that if the emotions are not enlisted in the service of action, action itself must remain arid and ineffectual for any high human end. We recognise the truth of that saying of the author of *Ecce Homo*, "No heart is pure which is not passionate, no virtue is safe which is not enthusiastic." And so we are growing to learn the terms on which alone we can offer the activity of the heart as a worthy sacrifice to God, as indeed our only reasonable and satisfying service of His will. We *can* control our emotions into a permanent motive of conduct. And we must in the interests of our soul's health gain such control. For we shall continue to be the pitiable slaves of feeling so long as we have not enlisted it in the service of some definite ideal of action. But once we have forced it to feel the strain of that yoke, it will become more and more our obedient vassal. The wandering fires of the heart will be drawn with more and more certainty into that central flame of active passion. The disturbing tumult of its incalculable eddies will be drawn into the steady stream of its energy. It is the heart in man that desires to be at rest, and the only rest it can know is absorption in a constant and a worthy purpose. To entrust it with great and arduous service is the only hope of its satisfaction. It alone can gather up all we are in the full service of God, and only in

that service does it come to full possession of itself. This is the confident word of truth which religion would preach to us in our day. The old condemnation of feeling in the interest of religion has passed away for ever. The religion which is not an education of the feelings, which is not an act of faith in their educability, has no longer any meaning for us.

And with this change of view, at once its cause and its effect, there has come the sense of the close alliance of all life. The old atomism which the reason enforced has become impossible even for the reason. We are no longer so many separate self-contained lives making with one another what terms of cooperation or mutual toleration may be possible. We are in the strictest sense one life acting from so many separate centres, all of them necessarily cooperant and determined in their cooperation by the one power in and for which they separately are. And here is the inexhaustible field of activity for the human heart. Here is the promise of its infinite growth towards its destined perfection. The heart alone has the immediate key to that communion which makes us. It is the healing ointment which soothes all the wounds of life. It is the myrrh which can deaden the sting of even the fiercest pain, which will allay the bitterness of that cup of suffering from which all must drink. So may the activity of the human heart become the worthiest instrument of the most perfect offering to the God of infinite mercy, the God of redeeming love.

The Epic of Redemption

L'homme est si grand que sa grandeur paraît même en ce qu'il se connaît misérable. Toutes ses miseres prouvent sa grandeur ; ce sont misères de grand seigneur, misères d'un roi dépossédé. — PASCAL.

The Epic of Redemption

Septuagesima.

"And God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good."—*Genesis* i. 31.

That is the first assertion of religious faith and it is the last. And it is, too, the everlasting changeless background on which the confused and shifting pageant of faith's agelong struggle is flung. The history of human faith is the history of the long warfare which this certainty has had to wage for its very existence. The certainty was there in the beginning as it will be in the end. Religion cannot exist without it. And there is no surer proof that man is naturally religious than his obstinate certainty that if the whole of things could be seen at once and as a whole, it would be recognised as very good. In every age that certainty affirms itself anew through some elect soul, and wherever such a soul appears it gathers around it by an irresistible attraction and enheartens with an invincible hope and courage all the dispirited, wayworn units of the great human pilgrimage.

Take any history of long-continued religious experience, and see how it bears witness to the truth of this fact. Take, for instance, the Bible. The Bible may, as we rightly insist to-day, be a library, and a library of volumes differing most widely in the circumstances of their origin, the

nature of their contents, and the character of their teaching. None the less it always has been, it is now, and it always will be for the religious soul in the strictest sense one book. Its very variety establishes the more clearly the unity of its purpose and effect. It begins with the announcement of that great certainty of which we have spoken. It begins with an act of faith in the goodness of the whole. It gathers up the agelong process of divine creation, that process which is coterminous with the existence of things in time, into one single moment, regards it in a single flash as with the eye of God, and from that standpoint pronounces it without hesitation very good. The fundamental characteristic of every act of man's faith in God is just that impossible and yet for man indispensable attempt to see things as God sees them. It was probably that particular urgency and necessity of faith which Tertullian was trying to express when he uttered his famous "Credo quia impossibile," "I believe in the impossible just because it is impossible."

But hardly has this act of faith been made, this certainty proclaimed, by the Jewish race, by Tertullian, or by any of the rest of us, before we are compelled to bring it down to the test of our actual experience. And there it meets with nothing but rebuke. Things are most obviously not very good. The more closely, indeed, we hold of God, the worse things as they are seem to us to be. That is the experience which the Bible records in the mythical story of the Fall. It

is only the account which a stern religious realism is forced to give of what man actually is and of what the world necessarily seems to him, being what he is, to be. Yet in the very moment in which a courageous spiritual sincerity forces this knowledge of good and evil upon him, he is able once more to renew his faith. In the crisis of apparently hopeless disillusionment, he realises a divine assurance that he will one day crush the head of that evil which so ruthlessly pursues him, biting viciously at his flying heel. And on throughout the whole history the same certainty revives out of the darkest hours of apparent defeat and felt despair. In Abraham, in Moses, in Elijah, in Isaiah, in the long succession of the prophets, the terrible conflict of faith is renewed, and the certainty is always recovered out of the very experiences that seem to extinguish it utterly. And when at last the saving remnant of Israel, the faithful servant of Jehovah, the victorious seed of the woman, were recognised in the complete activity of their redemptive mission in Jesus Christ, faith had still its trials to endure, its victories to win. And the long history of faith which the Bible is closes as it began with the proclamation of the great religious certainty as near to its final accomplishment. The long process of creation will end in a new creation, in the final triumph of the redemptive process, in a new heavens and a new earth wherein righteousness will naturally dwell.

So it is that the Bible is for the religious sense

one book. It ends on the note with which it opened. That first chapter is but the attempt to express from the standpoint of eternity a process which is still going forward, which will continue so long as man endures. The rest of the book is the history of creation under the aspect of time, the history of that redemptive activity of God which is for us His real continuous creation of His world. It was all stated in a phrase by our Lord, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." There is the cooperation through which God has deigned to create His world, through which He is preparing the perfected result, the new heavens and the new earth, the world which will be very good, which in the eyes of Him Who inhabiteth Eternity *is* very good. The redemptive will of the Father has condescended to work in man, His son, to that result.

Now what I want specially to emphasise, on this Septuagesima Sunday, which is as it were the annual festival of God as Creator, is that redemption is the key to the religious idea of creation, that the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is the secret of all our knowledge of God whatsoever. Do not mistake me. I do not mean that if our Lord had not lived as a man upon earth, man would not have known God. Such a view would be an insane denial of fact. God not only was known and known with a wonderful spiritual intimacy by the great seers of Israel before our Lord's coming, but He is known to-day by multitudes who have never heard the name of Jesus. But such a view

would not merely be a denial of the most obvious facts. It would be also a denial of the specific faith which makes us Christians. For one of the first utterances of that faith was this, that the love of God, which so wholly possessed our Lord that He was its perfect incarnation, was also the light which dwells in every man that comes into the world as his individual enlightenment. That is a venture of faith of which none of us perhaps would have been capable. It seems to go beyond the faith of the prophets of Israel who looked for the accomplishment of God's redemptive purpose through a saving remnant, through that remnant whom one of the later prophets described as the suffering servant of Jehovah. It was reserved for the faith of the early Christian generations to see in our Lord Himself the witness to a universal indwelling in man of the redeeming life, the illuminating light of God. And that was thenceforward our faith, the faith of the Christian world. In potency at least the redemptive power of God, the light of the Christ, is in every man. It is there, capable of being appealed to, witnessing in us against our perhaps habitual rejection of its appeal. It is there, redeeming or striving to redeem or suffering because its redemptive power is opposed and thwarted, and again victorious through its suffering. And it is through this redemptive power that works in us and with us so patiently, so unceasingly, that we know God at all, that we ascend to the faith in Him as Creator of all things, as the Eternal Life in Whom all things are very good.

Think of the vanity of any attempt to find God in the world apart from this illuminating power which the redemptive stress of the Divine Spirit can awake in the souls of men. Think how cold the purely intellectual Christian apologetic of the seventeenth century leaves us, that apologetic which grew enthusiastic over the exquisite order of nature and its miraculous adaptation of means to ends and thought so to demonstrate the existence of God to the soul of man. We do the eighteenth century a grievous wrong when we pour contempt upon it for its cold intellectual deism. We are indeed quite justified in saying that such deism had not even begun to realise what religion was, that it was nothing more than a particularly shallow metaphysic, a metaphysic which was, even intellectually, most unsatisfying and which besides had no remotest relation with religion. Yet it was not the fault of the eighteenth century that it held it. It was the inevitable result of the purely intellectual attitude of the Christian seventeenth century towards the whole matter of religious faith. But we at any rate have no temptations to approach questions of faith from that point of view. The non-human world is now the supreme difficulty with which faith in God has to grapple. The order which we find there seems utterly careless of human life. It is an order which proceeds on its way with a supreme indifference to every individual unit which it embraces and enlists in its service. It has no more respect for the human individual than for the non-human. It

uses all in the measure in which they can be of use to it, and flings them aside with ruthless indifference the moment it has exhausted their value. Nay more, so rich is it in resources that it seems contemptuous of all values. It is the great spendthrift and the great cynic. It destroys just as readily as it preserves. It will cut off in their prime the lives that seem to us of most promise and value. It will let the worthless linger out in untroubled uselessness to their fellows to the furthest term of our human span. It will torture the brave, the patient, the unselfish with lingering and malignant disease. It will dismiss the most heartless and selfish in painless peace. It has its savage outbursts of rage and greedy appetite when it fills its maw with hundreds of thousands of its children. Its ears are deaf to all the cries of suffering and pain which assail them at every moment.

And yet because of all this is faith in God less sure? I will not say that it does not constitute a grave trial of our faith, for assuredly it does and must. But I do say that faith never began here, and that where it has been at all worthy it has never quailed before the experienced hostility or indifference of nature or circumstance. The book of Job belongs to a past when the full measure of nature's moral indifference was not suspected, and yet it witnesses to a faith which had conquered the worst that the apparent hostility of circumstance could accomplish. For faith issues from a purely human experience. It is provoked, indeed,

by the action of the outside world upon us, by any and every such action. Or rather it is provoked by the reaction of the world upon us in response to our action upon it. But however provoked, that inner experience reveals all the working of God which we can ever know immediately. Think of what that experience is. It is a profound and insatiable discontent with self. It is the revelation of the weakness or worthlessness of self. It is our own judgment and condemnation of ourselves, a judgment and condemnation to which we feel ourselves impelled against our own superficial will, and yet in which the deeper and more enduring action of our will grows more and more to concur. It is the experience which makes us strangers and pilgrims amid all that is at first feeling most satisfying here. It is the discovery that this is not our spirit's home, that the spirit here is always on a journey, that it can never here find its final rest. And yet when our self-discontent is most profound, when the probe has gone home most surely, when self-proving has become most sincere and most painful, just then the great consolation arrives. A heavenly peace broods upon the troubled conflict, the soul knows its rest in the very fact of its onward struggle. A power has entered into its weakness and works through it. An eternal satisfaction has declared itself through the very stab and sting of the inner pain. That is the spiritual history of man. It is the history of man's discovery of God as the human redeemer, as the redeemer of man by man. It is

the history of God's revelation of Himself to man as the Power which constitutes him, and constitutes him as at once the theatre and the conscious instrument of this conflict in which dwells the supreme peace, of this truceless dissatisfaction with himself at the heart of which resides the infinite satisfaction of a Presence higher than himself.

And out of this experience of the redemptive God there grows naturally, inevitably, the faith in the creative God, the faith that somehow the whole of things must serve the purpose of that redeeming will, the faith that the most inexplicable waywardness of nature not only does not contradict that purpose, but must somehow, even though we may never see how, contribute to it, the faith that through all things that are there works a spirit of very goodness. It is, I admit, a sheer act of faith, but it is an act of faith which the immediate experience of the redeeming God has always forced man to make and which only that experience enables him to make. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Only the soul that has known God in the fierce stress of its own personal life and has been true to Him there can dare to say that. But such a soul will always say it. For to such a soul it is the one certain truth.

Sexagesima.

"The serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made."—*Genesis iii.* 1.

Of all the knowledge which man has there is none so certain, so immediate, so irresistible as

his religious knowledge. And yet there is none which is less capable of being reduced to positive and adequate statement. The knowledge which we include under the general name of science is always an inference or induction from facts attested by the senses. The intellect is the prevailing factor in its formation. And the intellect always proceeds by way of analysis. Even when it is framing its largest generalisations, analysis is still its method. It isolates the facts with which it deals under the particular aspect which alone is important for its special mode of enquiry. Even when it is concerned with the whole world of things, its interest is still partial and exclusive. It never faces the real undivided whole of things, for the simple reason that its instrument, the intellect, is unable by its very constitution to do so. And yet man does continually face the whole of things, and faces it by an instinct which goes deeper and acts more universally than the intellect ever can. He faces it when he judges, as he must, whatever his intellectual capacity or cultivation may be, the spiritual relation of the whole universe to himself, the effect of its life upon his life, and in turn the responsibility of his life to its. I say man does this by an original instinct of his being, by the instinct which constitutes him as spirit. And that we may not deceive ourselves with words, let us try to define for ourselves what we mean by spirit. By spirit I understand life regarded, not as the unconscious register, the necessary result, of its own process, but as in some sense the conscious master and

judge of its own process. Wherever life has attained that dignity, it is what we may rightly call spirit. It is then a creative breath of life, originating life in its measure, impressing upon it a definite character, weighing it in the scales of a definite kind of judgment, controlling or seeking to control all its movements in the interest of a definite end. It is this, and not the mere necessary persistence of a movement imparted to it from without, not the mere register of a character impressed upon it from without. Spirit, in short, is life whose motive, whose activity, and whose end lie in a very real sense within itself. But again it is another and an apparently contradictory peculiarity of life as spirit that it cannot be merely individual, that at least it feels it is not truly spirit so long as it is merely individual. Its motive, its activity, its end must be all alike universal or tend towards universality. And so it is that man can never be satisfied with his own life because it is not *fully* spirit, because it cannot find with certainty the motive of universal good within itself, because its activity falls short at every moment of the universal good, because the end of universal good which it feels it ought to serve is hopelessly beyond its farthest possible reach. And yet also man is sure that he is *in some sense* spirit just because nothing short of this life of self-contained universal spirit can satisfy him. He may never reach it, but he will for ever strive after it with conscious will or sub-conscious longing. His heart is restless till it finds its rest in

Perfect Spirit, in God, in the Life whose motive, activity, and end are wholly in Itself, and are yet the highest motive, the most perfect activity, the most satisfying end of all life under whatever form it may exist.

Now it is just the fact that man is spirit even in this imperfect degree that not only enables but compels him to judge the world as a whole, to judge it not as science judges it, as so many isolated aspects of the activity of matter, or even of mind, but as an expression, a mode of activity, of the Universal and Perfect Spirit. Such judgments are immediate. They are judgments such as we pass upon persons, judgments dictated primarily by immediate attraction or repulsion, and in their more matured form controlled by that deep permanent sense of distinction between right and wrong which is the ground-plan of our developed humanity. The scientist studies the world as a life-process, and is not at all concerned with the effects of that process upon himself or others. His one object is to establish the constant order of the process by observing all its details with sufficient closeness to trace their systematic connection. But man as spirit judges the world by the total impress it leaves upon his moral nature. He knows well that he is not coldly and dispassionately measuring it from the outside. He is measuring it according to the measure of a man, out of the deepest passion that is in him, the passion for right. And he knows, too, that that measure is not merely the measure of a man or even of an

angel, but that it is the measure, however imperfectly conceived and expressed through him, of the Eternal Source of Right, of the God Who is Righteousness.

Now we are always forming such judgments. And in their developed form they imply that immediate personal sense of our relations with Perfect and Universal Spirit which we call religion. It was on that account that I spoke at the beginning of our religious knowledge as being more immediate and more certain than any other kind of knowledge. It is not a mere induction or inference, though it may be that also. It is somehow immediately involved in the most elementary activities of man as spirit. And just because it is so involved, it is not always expressed, and more than that it is never best and most adequately expressed, in the form of exact scientific statement. It is always best expressed in the language of poetry, in concrete imagery taken from the world of personal human relations. Now the Bible is compact of such language. It is a storehouse of the profoundest religious knowledge, all of it run in the mould of this imaginative symbolism. We lose so much of its meaning and value when we treat it as an exact and scientific statement of a truth which can never be so stated with any approach to adequacy. And yet I am wrong in implying that it has ever been so treated in fact. What has really happened is something quite different. The Scriptural commentator has often attempted to treat the Bible as theology, as an exact and scientific statement

of revealed truth. But even when he has not known it, and very generally he has not known it, he has always been foiled in the attempt. The imagery of the Bible itself has been too much for him. The theology which he has extracted from that imagery he has indeed extracted. The theology was not there, and very often it has but the remotest relation to what was there. Take as an example this third chapter of Genesis which we have read this morning. It has been treated in the past as an actual historical account of the fall of man from a state of primal innocence, such an account as an eye-witness of the events narrated might have drawn up ; an account, indeed, actually regarded as handed down by tradition by the two human actors in the drama or else communicated immediately to the historian by the Divine actor in that drama. Let the breath of suspicion fall upon the likelihood of such a story regarded as matter-of-fact happening, and its whole religious value is in danger of disappearing. Yet think how little careful the literalist has been to adhere to the actual form of the story. In spite of himself he has ceased after all to be a literalist. He has been forced to introduce a whole world of later theological conceptions and ideas concerning which there is not the slightest evidence or even probability that they were present to the mind of the original narrator. He has seen in the instrument of the Fall not the serpent of the actual story,—for the Eastern the most subtle beast of the field, the wisest of the earth's creatures,—but the spiritual

Enemy of mankind. He has seen in the naturalistic curse pronounced by the Creator upon the serpent in the actual story, ("It," that is to say the seed of the woman, the human descendants of Eve, "shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise its heel,") the promise of the crushing of Satanic power by a Divine-Human Redeemer and the exposure of that Redeemer to the momentarily galling but ultimately ineffectual assaults of Satan. Remember, I am not saying that these interpretations are illegitimate. I only wish to point out that they are not in the story regarded as an historical narrative of fact, and that the importation of them into the story is in itself a virtual abandonment of its historical character, a virtual treatment of it as mythical allegory.

But how much confusion for the religious sense of at least two generations of men in Western Europe might have been avoided if this virtual abandonment had been frankly declared, if this virtual treatment had been recognized for what it was. And more than that, how much religion has lost by the failure to realize the poetical and imaginative character of the whole story. Just because we have been afraid to face the fact that the story was conceived and presented in the atmosphere of imagination, we are fain to forget it altogether, to evade it so far as we can as a stumbling-block in the path of contemporary religion. To me at least that seems to be a counsel of cowardice and despair. For the truth is that only in the language of imagination can the

spiritual history of man's realisation of evil be written, and that that language could not have been used with more adequacy for this special purpose than it was used in this myth of a childish race. It is only the child whose imagination is fresh enough to picture these things, and here the childhood of the race has pictured them with the nearest possible approach to adequacy and perfection.

For if this were not the story of the race, it would at least be the story of the individual, authenticated out of his own experience as spirit. In our infancy the law of Eternal Right is foreshortened to some few simple and mainly negative commands. The child wanders about in the unconscious innocence of those great distinctions of right and wrong which will form all the heroic substance of its later life. As yet they lie latent in the undeveloped germ of its spiritual being. Its only consciousness of them is provoked at the point where its natural desires are restrained in the interests of a law whose right to control it it begins dimly to feel. Then there begins gradually to work in the childish heart the spirit of self-assertion, the disturbing sense of its own separate right to be, the subtlest of all the forces that at once connect it with the life which is lower than human and urge it on to try the full range of its human privilege of revolt against all that is not itself. The restraining limits of the law are deliberately forced. In obedience to an inner urgency which is half-animal, half-spiritual, which is of the

earth-nature and yet of the earth-nature in its blind serpentine groping after some kind of immediate personal wisdom, the child deliberately violates the decree which is as yet for it an alien decree, whose only sanction for it is the authority of those who have issued it. And in that deliberate revolt the child's conscience is at last waked into some kind of existence, however feeble. It has had its first bitter taste of the knowledge of good and evil. It stands confused, ashamed, before the inner consequences of its own act. The sense of secret discomfort which possesses it testifies against it, forces it to recognize itself as self-pledged to the cause of evil. Goodness takes on the form of a personal accuser before whom it cowers away instinctively in shame. It has begun to learn the secret of God as the Judge of its most hidden thought. That is a lesson which cannot be learned in a day. Yet from the moment that the soul of man has begun to learn it, there is hope. And the word of hope is spoken by God Himself in the inner silence. It is first of all the condemnation of that earth-nature from which temptation came. Whatever good it may incidentally have wrought, in itself it is evil and its immediate suggestions were evil. Man learns that he can and that he must bruise its head, the very seat of its venomous power. But he learns also that he will never wholly escape the force of its assaults. Where it cannot hope with success to assail him openly, it will lurk in secret places to attack him where he is most off his guard. He knows that till the end

it will bruise his heel. And he learns too that all the gains of his life will come to him through a fierce assay of pain. Because he is what he now knows himself to be, the incarnate conflict of good and evil forces, the world in and for which he labours will share for him in that division which constitutes himself. It will yield its blessing only after stern and cruel resistance. Yet the pain which is his punishment will also work his redemption. The warfare with evil in the sweat of his soul is already the foretaste of that goodness which he will one day victoriously possess.

It is a veritable word of God to every soul of man spoken out of the experience of the childhood of the race—spoken in the language of poetry and imaginative symbol. If it had not been spoken in that language, it would have no meaning for us to-day. Because we had failed to realize that it was spoken in that language and had insisted on regarding it as matter-of-fact historical narrative, it had already almost lost its meaning for us. But poetry it is, and as poetry it still holds the key to the whole secret of human history.

Quinquagesima.

"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished" —*St. Luke xviii.* 31.

There is no question over which New Testament scholars have been more perplexed than that of the exact meaning of the title "Son of Man."

You will remember how often, directly or by implication, our Lord applied the title to Himself. Sometimes He speaks of Himself directly as being the Son of Man. Still more frequently He refers to the mission of the Son of Man in such a way as to leave not the slightest doubt that He wishes to identify Himself with that figure of prophecy. The Synoptic witness is here at one with the witness of the Fourth Gospel, and both point to the conclusion that our Lord had deliberately chosen the title "Son of Man" rather than that of Messiah to describe the nature of His personality and to indicate the character of His mission, and that in so far as He accepted the latter title He took care to interpret it in terms of the traditional attributes of the former. Now there is little doubt about the significance of the title "Messiah" in Jewish tradition. The Messiah of prophecy was invariably the descendant of David, the Son of David, who would restore the Israelitish monarchy, and restore it with a circumstance and authority such as it had not known at the height of its past greatness. It was from this conception apparently that our Lord deliberately dissociated Himself. And in order to do so the more effectually He chose that other title of prophecy whose traditional import is for us so perplexing and obscure.

It is all the more perplexing since it was the title Messiah which finally prevailed in the Christian Church as the sufficient account of the Divine nature and mission of Jesus. Yet, if the name prevailed, the idea had changed. And the change

from the idea of the restorer of the earthly monarchy to that of the Risen Christ was, we may legitimately surmise, affected by the associations which our Lord evoked in the Jewish mind when He called Himself "Son of Man." That surmise will still be legitimate and even probable, though we may have to admit our inability to trace the change of meaning of the term Messiah in the early Christian Church or to point definitely to the influence of the term "Son of Man" in producing the change. But perhaps this inability is not so great as at first sight it may appear. For St. Paul at least identifies our Lord with the heavenly man, with the final or completed Adam Who was come to be a life-giving Spirit, in contrast with the first Adam, who had come with a life merely derived and given. Here surely we may suppose that we have some hint of the influence of the title "Son of Man" in shaping the Christian conception of the Messiah.

And if we may conjecture back from this conception of St. Paul's, we shall be prepared to find in the title "Son of Man" a symbol of the perfect man, of man as he is eternally in the idea of God, of man when he has achieved the power of the Divine purpose in and for him—the power of actively communicating life and not merely that of passively receiving it. Now one of our greatest English New Testament scholars, if not indeed indubitably the greatest, Dr. Edwin Abbott, has recently demonstrated with a great show of probability that that is exactly the meaning of the title

"Son of Man" which is warranted by a broad survey of the Old Testament passages in which it is used. And so we may perhaps for the present accept this meaning as representing with some degree of exactness what our Lord conceived Himself to be. He thought of Himself as man made in the very image of God, the incarnate expression of God's original and typical idea of man, the Perfect Man Who was veritably one with God in the Spirit which can give life.

But if this is indeed something like our Lord's conception of His own nature and mission, the words of the Gospel for to-day may serve to throw further light upon that conception in its fulness. "All things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death; and the third day He shall rise again." Now the Son of Man is represented in the prophets as uniformly victorious. He is clothed upon with dominion and power over the living creatures. He is master and lord of creation. But here our Lord introduces a new note from the prophetic tradition and brings it into harmony with the note of dominion associated with the prophetic "Son of Man." It is the suffering servant of the 53rd chapter of the Book of Isaiah who shall be thus satisfied through the travail of his soul. The Son of Man, our Lord has felt, must suffer in order to become worthy of His inheritance

of glory. The sufferings of contradiction and rejection endured and recorded in the anguish of his soul by the author of the Twenty-second Psalm must be His also before He can enter into the fulness of His mission. Our Lord can assure His judges that they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of glory attended by His holy angels. But long before He had counted the cost of that assurance. He had known that He Who was to be the victorious Son of Man must prepare Himself through the sufferings of the despised and afflicted servant of God.

Now what is it that this glimpse into our Lord's consciousness of the mystery of His own personality reveals to us of the nature and history of man's spirit? Does it not fit in exactly with that inspired picture of man which the Hebrew mythology of the Creation and the Fall has already depicted for us in the language of poetry? Man was originally created by God, created by Him in His own image —that is to say, his being is the outcome and expression of an idea of God, of an idea which, because it is God's, is very good. Our life reveals, however distantly, with whatever disastrous deformation, the infinitely Perfect Life which is its source, or at the very least reveals some particular aspect of that Life. Were it not so, man could not claim to know God; man could never have claimed even to know *of* God, could never have framed the idea of God, could never have known the infinite restlessness which he does know until he finds rest in the hope of rest in God. The idea

of God in us is God's idea which went forth in the beginning of things from His heart of love to form us, which still goes forth from that heart in every moment of His ceaseless grace to re-form us. And our need of rest in God is again the witness of His nature in us, the insatiable home-hunger of the exile while he remains an exile.

But if God so created and creates and re-creates us, it is because we need a continual re-creation, because He made us at first creatures of growth. And to grow in spirit is to take all the risks of growth. It is to do the evil and discover the evil. It is to acquire inevitably the knowledge of good and evil. That is the second part of the great epic of man. But there is a third. Out of the very heart of the evil a soul of goodness arises. In the very thick of the temptation God has provided a way of escape. Evil itself becomes the scourge to lash us back to God. It is only when we lie down in it contented, when we do not feel its curse but accept it as a blessing, that we have become spiritually dead or at least have sunk into the spiritual torpor which seems death. But so long as we feel the sting and goad of our own evil or of the evil about us, so long as we live in effective revolt against the one and the other, the redemptive re-creative grace of God is working in us to some effect. The evil of growth *is* evil, a denial of God, of the Perfect Goodness in Whose image we feel we ought to be to be at peace, in Whose image we ideally are. But the pain of growth is redemptive, may be even now for us the very crown and

joy of life, has been in the experience of many a righteous soul of our race its actual joy and crown. It is perhaps only in that purgatorial pain of growth that man, the creature of growth, can ever learn the satisfaction that endures. In our Lord's humanity we think we see but little of that inward pain—though in fact it is evidenced in the stories of His repeated temptation and His agonies of prayer—only because our view of life is so individual. But as life grows in the grace of God, it becomes super-individual, it becomes in very truth increasingly one with all life that is. And in that growth man but adds to his inward redemptive pain. He suffers in the defection of others, and suffers from it all the more that it is more difficult to convince that defection than his own. That is the incalculable magnitude of the suffering of the soul that is really great and Godlike. Yet it has its victory and its reward even there. The obedience of tens of thousands of souls to the spell of Jesus Christ; the reverence, however formal on the one hand, however reluctant on the other, of a whole civilization for His name, these things are the witnesses to that victory. Yes, the suffering of the Son of Man, and not merely His suffering from without—from the contradiction, the rejection, the cruelty of man, but His suffering from within, His suffering through the sympathy which placed Him at the heart of human life, which gave Him the feeling of all our infirmities and of the infirmities of us all, which tortured Him with the sense of others' defection as indeed His very own, become His own

through the enlargement of His spirit beyond all limits of individuality—that suffering, I say, revealed the way and became the pledge of all human redemption. Founded in it, Christianity became, is, and will ever remain the secret of true and satisfying life, and of the only spirit which can renew life. It revealed the life-giving spirit.

The modern preaching of the nauseous gospel of what is quite falsely called the joy of life, of the gospel which proclaims that the voice of Nature urges us to yield unreservedly to certain imperious instincts, to snatch certain immediate and admittedly passing pleasures, and ought to be obeyed, is a reaction to—I know not what. It is not a reaction to Paganism—for Paganism at its lowest was certainly not that, and at its highest was exactly the reverse of that. Perhaps one may say that it is a neurotic reaction to the beast, which has the advantage over us of being not neurotic. But at any rate it is a blasphemy against the deepest and most trustworthy witness of our nature, the only nature that we dare obey. We know that we are stronger for every instance of self-restraint, however unintelligent it may be. We know that the only pleasures which we dare enjoy are the pleasures which bring responsibilities, which bind us more firmly in the bundle of life and expose us to all its risks, the pleasures which do not bubble on life's surface but enter into its generous substance and become part of the libation which it offers to God, the Perfect Goodness. Let us see that even the lightest of the pleasures in whose enjoyment

we permit ourselves will bear that test. Are they a customary element and factor of that strength which must bear the strain that God puts upon all human strength? Can they become a part of the redemptive stress of human life towards God? Then let us enjoy them, for then we are not merely enjoying them, we are using them.

The Discipline of Nature

"In harmony with Nature?" Restless fool,
Who with such heat dost preach what were to thee,
When true, the last impossibility—
To be like Nature strong, like Nature cool!

Know, man hath all which Nature hath, but more,
And in that *more* lie all his hopes of good.
Nature is cruel, man is sick of blood;
Nature is stubborn, man would fain adore;

Nature is fickle, man hath need of rest;
Nature forgives no debt, and fears no grave;
Man would be mild, and with safe conscience blest.

Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends;
Nature and man can never be fast friends.
Fool, if thou canst not pass her, rest her slave.

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

The Discipline of Nature

First Sunday in Lent.

"Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth."—*St. Luke xxi.* 34, 35.

Discipline is not an accident of life. It is its essence. And like most essential things, it is provided for in the constitution of life itself. If it were merely an accident, it might be profitable for us to devise with infinite care its various means and occasions. But being essential, its means and occasions are here already. It is only necessary for us to take serious note of them, to respect them and turn them to fruitful account. The formal disciplines which we laboriously invent may have their value. But assuredly it is a value which is supplementary to that of the discipline provided by nature itself.

Let us this Lent think of some aspects of this discipline which is imposed upon our lives by their necessary relation to the universal life of things, to that life which we usually term nature. And first of all let us think of what we are wont to call the uncertainty of life. We have come indeed to believe, as our fathers did not and, with the knowledge which they had, could not believe, in a fixed order of succession in the life of nature. But our

belief has its limits. It is theoretical and not practical. We may believe in an undeviating process in the life of nature, but its particular issues and their particular relation to us remain often as incalculable as they were for the men of a less scientific age. Nay, perhaps if we think of it, our belief that things happen according to some unvarying law has but heightened our wonder at the things that do happen. Our belief that certain movements of matter, determined by mysterious attractions and repulsions of the elements that compose it, must result in the earthquake, does not lessen our dismay at its suddenness or its destructiveness when it comes. Theoretically life is caught up in a movement of uniform and immutable law. Practically the issues of the operation of that law for each individual life are unknown. Our lives are set in the midst of an ever-baffling uncertainty.

Now it is that uncertainty that makes us. Into the most naturally careless life it has introduced some leaven of discipline. If, indeed, uncertainty were absolute, then doubtless we should never have learned the need of discipline. And, again, if life moved along a path of changeless certainty, discipline would have had no meaning for it. But it is just because there is an assured order whose secrets we almost instinctively learn to obey, and yet whose issues for us we can never count on with certainty, that some measure of discipline becomes not so much a voluntary choice as an imperious necessity. We must learn to guard

against a hundred possible risks, and where we cannot hope to evade them we must learn how to meet and survive them. On the lowest plane of life, on the merely material plane, the serious exercise of that discipline is the first sign of man's emergence from the stage of barbarism. And even on that plane the contrasted forms of this necessary life-discipline appear. Even there it is both the discipline which takes risks and the discipline which prepares for them. The pioneers of civilization were the sea-board peoples, the peoples to whom the bounty of nature was not offered on easy terms, as it was to the pastoral peoples who roamed undisturbed the illimitable plains. They had to take the risks of the great deep, they had to trust themselves to the venture of discovering unknown shores. And against those risks they had to make adequate provision. They had to win the confidence of the peoples who lived inland behind them and to persuade them of the existence of wants they never yet had felt. They had equally to win the confidence and stimulate the needs of the strange peoples among whom the fortunes of their sea-wanderings might carry them. It was these middlemen of the early ages that gave man his first hint of civilization. They were the founders of capital, the savings of the past which prepare the larger future ; and they were the founders of the city, the collective life which is possible only through the existence of capital. Before them, the pastoral peoples had lived contentedly from hand to mouth, risking nothing and preparing

nothing. Before them, the city, the collective life which transcended the family or the wandering group of families, did not exist. Boldly facing the uncertainties of life, they increased indefinitely the fruitfulness of the earth and at the same time evoked the civilities which belong to the collective life of mankind. They induced men who would never otherwise have thought of it to enlarge production beyond their own immediate needs. And in doing so they broke down the barriers of tribal exclusiveness which but for them would for ever have kept men apart.

Now all this is a parable of how man grows spiritually through the uncertainty of life. There is for most of us just enough certainty about life to make us easy-going in the matter of character. We can count on our ordinary moral equipment to carry us through the ordinary dangers which we have to meet. So customary, indeed, are they that we never think of them as dangers at all. They are but the daily chances and changes of our spiritual weather. They urge to no unwonted self-control, they call upon no reserves of moral force, they make none of the extraordinary demands of the unexpected. If life were always thus a thing of moral routine, it is possible that we might never offend grievously against customary canons of morality, but it is certain also that morality would have lost all its force, that the disciplined and trustworthy will which is its life-blood, out of which its enlarging demand ever proceeds, would never have been formed. Fortunately for us, life

is not for any of us this placid, equable movement of customary and expected routine. The dark days come to all of us which try what we are and which too often reveal a degree of weakness, a lack of moral fibre, which we could never have ourselves suspected. Those days, dark as they are, are our opportunity. We feel, no doubt, when they do come, only the paralysing shock of the discovery they have brought. And they may, alas! have brought it too late. So at least it seems to us in our first access of despair. We move about among our fellows with the pain of the new glimpse of self-knowledge burning within us. We seem to them to be alive with the fair life of the spirit which they have ascribed to us, which we had confidently thought was our own. But we know that we are in fact but whited sepulchres, full within of the crumbling bones of our poor dead selves. It is a dangerous moment for any soul to have to pass through. But it is also the Divinely-appointed occasion of our renewal. It is through such occasions that our spirits learn the need of discipline, and what is more, gain that power of concentration which is of itself the beginning of discipline. There is in us an instinct of spiritual self-preservation which needs the sting of realised moral poverty to rouse it into effective being. We learn in those hours of strain that we cannot count on life as a calm procession of foreseen and expected certainties, that the unexpected call may any day be made upon our energies, that the temptation whose danger has not been, and perhaps

could not be, foreseen may assail us, that we are nothing if we have not stored up the reserve force on which we can draw in any emergency. And then too we learn that the soul must gain its real courage, that it can only perfect its self-discipline, in going forth to meet all the dangers which may threaten it. It is at least by facing danger that it will learn where danger can be and ought to be avoided. The prudence which knows how and when to retreat is never gained in the midst of panic. It is always the ripest fruit of courage and often its surest proof.

So it is that the uncertainty of life is the greatest occasion of its discipline. It is just this uncertainty which drives us to seek and to find some hidden ground of certainty within. "Nature is fickle, we have need of rest," said Matthew Arnold. And, we may add, we have need of certainty, which is our only ground of rest. The rest of the human spirit lies in the measure of self-sureness it can attain. It is not in spiritual idleness that we can find it, but in the unceasing spiritual activity which is ever gaining the right to trust itself. It is in strenuous reaction against circumstance, not in passive acceptance of it or submission to it, that we are safe. And if nature were a habit, if circumstance were the uniform arrival of the expected and foreseen, our characters could never attain that habit which is their strength. Uniformity in the external means carelessness, sloth, dissolution in the life within. If we could ever secure the outward conditions beyond the reach

of chance and change, we should have done our best or rather our worst to arrest our moral growth. Our hearts would be intoxicated with their unrestraint. They would be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and the petty cares of this life which would still declare themselves through our very carelessness. But that is just the security we can never, fortunately for us, achieve. We can, indeed, and we ought to strive to secure such a uniformity in outer conditions as will enable all to live, to enter upon the full heritage of life. That is within the scope of human effort, and it is just on that account a responsibility imposed upon us which we dare not even try to evade. But the life-heritage into which all must enter, into which all have the right to free and unimpeded entrance, is a heritage of struggle, of watchfulness, of effort. The trial will come at a moment that we know not, it will come in a form which we had not expected. As a snare shall it come on all them who dwell on the face of the whole earth. That is the word of eternal wisdom speaking to the heart of a universal experience. And there is our hope, there is the pledge of a life which is self-aware, there is nature's own scourge of discipline, there is the root of the spiritual habit of strength.

Yet there is one other thing to be noted in this unexpectedness of spiritual trial. It is unexpected only in the forms which it happens to assume. But however various its forms, it sifts us always in the same way. It presses home upon us at

the same points, it tries the same fundamental stuff of character, it proves our courage, our seriousness, the high loyalty of our rectitude, it winnows away as chaff the superficial sentiment in which we have deceived ourselves, the frivolity of our emotions, all the loose play with righteous aims which comes so easily to the idle spirit. It is always in all its forms the day of the Lord, the urgency of the judgment of God. It is God that is proving us in all the uncertainty of things, and proving us that we may find the roots of an assured strength in His nature of good, that out of the restlessness of our own lazy mood we may be delivered into the rest of Him Who worketh hitherto. Whose own rest is the activity of an unceasing redemption of all life from what it happens to be to what He meant it to be.

Second Sunday in Lent.

"The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." —*Rom. i.* 20.

We thought last Sunday of the nature of our discipline through the practical uncertainty of things. That uncertainty, we saw, lies in the particular issues of things for us. It is the uncertainty of how things will turn out, of what the future will be when it comes to record itself as present, that tries us. Against all that fickleness of mere fortune we must be prepared with a will

rooted in principle and firmly set to the pursuit of an end of definite character. And nothing prepares this steadiness of the will's purpose and direction so surely as that very uncertainty which makes it necessary.

To-day let us turn to consider the discipline which something the very opposite of this uncertainty of things urges us to achieve. If the future is uncertain, nothing can be more certain than the past. What may happen is incalculable. What has happened is definitely given. And if the uncertainty of the future helps to make us, so also does the certainty of the past. The discipline of the one is as necessary for us as the discipline of the other.

"Nature is stubborn, man would fain adore." So says Matthew Arnold in the same sonnet from which I quoted last Sunday. And it is just in developing this contrast between nature and ourselves that I may indicate the nature of the discipline which the irrevocableness of the past imposes upon us. But first let me say that when I speak of the past as being irrevocable, I do not mean that it is merely dead and done with, that nothing we can do can change its character and effect. If that were so, then it would have no vital relation with us whatsoever. If we could not in any way modify it, then assuredly it could not in any measure affect us. I mean, therefore, the very opposite of this deadness of the past when I speak of it as irrevocable. I mean that it is the given force against which we have to measure

our living energy, that the past must be in some sense absorbed into ourselves and become the material of that future which we are preparing, that it is exactly the past which we must transform in that vital fashion in order that the future for which we are in some measure responsible may be. But I mean also that that past as the original material on which our wills must act is given in a definite form and character. We have to transform it by our living action, but in order to transform it we must begin by taking it for what it is. Any illusions in which we may allow ourselves as to its real character here and now as we come to deal with it, will inevitably translate themselves into defeat in our mode of handling it, into imperfection in the results of our handling of it. The accomplished is the one stubborn certainty with which we have to deal.

It ought not then to be difficult to see how this certainty of the accomplished fact must be one of the most necessary factors in human discipline. "Man would fain adore." That is the ultimate expression of a universal need of our nature. It is perhaps so ultimate that we fail sometimes to recognise the need which it expresses. In its undeveloped stages that need takes forms so much less ultimate that we fail to detect its identity or even its remote connection with the need of adoration. Yet we would admit, I think, that man does always and everywhere aspire, that we cannot be men without experiencing that dissatisfaction which even in its most apparently

self-centred forms is at least the witness to our necessary tendency to aspire. Our actual aspiration may have the most limited range, it may direct itself to ends the most vulgar and sordid, but it is there by reason of our innate dissatisfaction with what we have and what we are. And in this connection let us never forget that dissatisfaction with what we have always involves and witnesses to dissatisfaction with what we are. The connection is, of course, far too often unconscious, but none the less it is always there, implied in the very existence of the feeling. Man always wants to have because he feels that the particular object of his desire will help him to be more fully what he wants to be. It may be that what he wants to be is something altogether gross and unworthy. None the less he would know nothing whatsoever of the desire to have if he were not possessed by that desire to be, however unworthy and impoverished its aim.

So at least we are never satisfied with what we are, however little we may be conscious of the feeling. And out of that initial dissatisfaction with the self of any moment, with the self which has been once attained, may grow and actually has grown all the range of adoration of the human spirit. But throughout the whole development of this spiritual need which is the very constituent of our humanity, there is everywhere noticeable the tendency to a divorce between the ideal and the actual. And that divorce, wherever it declares itself, is doubly fatal. It is fatal to our aspira-

tion after the ideal. It is fatal to our utilisation of the actual. Through it our ideal, however exalted it may be, becomes vague, anæmic, the instrument of infinite self-deception. Through it the actual, from which after all we cannot entirely escape, is reduced to be the instrument of some merely temporary and material advantage.

Is not this divorce in fact the key to much that is most depressing and disappointing in our human history? It is not that man is ever without the intimate need of aspiring after the ideal. But that need in any case demands development. It necessarily appears at first in very meagre and limited forms. The ideals of the savage or of the child cannot at once acquire the same width of range or fulness or spiritual quality which we expect in the ideals of the civilised or the full-grown man. But instead of helping that need to develop, we actually rebuke and paralyse it by our acquiescence in the divorce of which I have spoken. The ideal which is not closely connected with the actual, which is not seeking to express itself through the actual, falls back to the common earth limp and lifeless. It is like a kite whose string has snapped. It has no connecting link with the hard, obstinate actuality of fact. And so to him who has cherished it, it becomes the source of a profound and universal despair, of a cynicism which seeks in self-defence to be content with the satisfaction of chance desires. The power of aspiration is permanently rebuked, perhaps actually killed, in the soul which has made the

futile attempt to reach the ideal by abandoning the actual.

Or again if we separate the actual from all commerce with the ideal, how easily we may lose touch with the ideal altogether. For the actual is so easily manipulated, far more easily manipulated for its own sake than for the sake of something beyond it. We can so easily become so immersed in the engrossingness of its immediate details as to lose sight of that which can alone give those details their true proportion and their real value, viz., the further good which they might serve. We can so easily accept the satisfaction which our ready manipulation of the actual gives us that we forget altogether the further satisfactions to which it ought to point. And so, oblivious of what was once almost an instinct for some kind of satisfying ideal, we meanly subside upon a life, however apparently respectable, of mere sense and custom.

This has been the history of our human failure all through the ages. And yet the stern facts of life are here in all their sternness just to help to redeem us from that failure. They are here to provide the discipline which will redeem us from it. The Divine Spirit is here informing everyone of us with that native instinct of aspiration which calls for hard and healthy discipline. The world of common fact is here in all its stubbornness to put our aspiration to the proof, to educate it out of a mere instinct into a steady and fruitful act. The soul of man cannot adore or even aspire

by merely launching itself into the void in quest of the unknown. It must first find hints of that which is to it as yet unknown in all that it most intimately knows, in all with which it has to deal through that stern and serious ing of action which alone gives entrance to all the secrets and possibilities of life. It must take the actual with it, incorporated in its very self, in order that its own aspiration may be honoured and that the actual may be lifted at least one step towards the ideal. It is a hard and relentless discipline, but it is also a heartening one; for through it we are making our souls and making the soul of the world in which we are.

There is no other way. See what happens when we forget this elementary lesson of the hard facts of life. See how art becomes a ridiculous and blasphemous trifling with the claims of that sternest and purest of all human ideals, Beauty, the moment it loses touch with the world of fact. See how it becomes aristocratic, pessimistic, and in the end futile, when it grasps the world of fact only to proclaim its utter loss of faith in it. All this talk with which we are nowadays made so familiar about art being essentially aristocratic is a lie, and a very foolish lie. But it is also, for the moment, a sad and bitter truth, simply because we have lost faith in the redeemability of the common world. The artist is for the moment a fugitive, a determined and despairing fugitive, from the only world which could ever make him a real artist. No living shape of divine beauty

can ever be moulded in that void of spiritual despair, that artificial æsthetic reserve. There is no stuff there to make it of. Only the sad ghosts of art haunt that attenuated air. It is out of the coarse clay of common earth that God makes life in His own image. Art, like religion, like every expression of the longing after God, is essentially democratic. All these must keep their faith in the common stuff of earth, they must labour for it and through it, they must work with a high heart, with an unyielding faith, with an invincible patience, to transmute it into the heavenly image which is its destiny. Otherwise they will be false to themselves and to God.

How religion suffers from that same tendency we are always being reminded by bitter experience. Like Antæus, it keeps its God-given strength only so long as it touches mother earth. The forces that tend to break that contact are the forces which rob it of all its living power. And, alas! they are so many and often apparently so intimate to its own constitution. It thinks to seek after God most surely by denying the things of earth, to read the ultimate truth by rejecting the present fact. It is always being tempted to put its trust in the attainment of some mystic knowledge which will be the release from all that we most surely know here. It recoils in fear from every increase of common knowledge, from our surer grip upon the reality of that past through which it has grown to be what it is. It uncritically welcomes every foolish and groundless speculation about the

secrets of a spiritual order as remote as possible from our ordinary experience. It is this foolish faithlessness and this still more foolish credulity that make religion barren for those who accept it, and make it too impossible for increasing numbers of sensible people to accept at all. Religion has had its real power all through the ages because it believed, however perverted the forms of its belief, that the actual world was capable of redemption, that a great redemptive power was working in its actual constitution, that the real spiritual order, however transcendent in its source and in its ever-present eternal completeness, had yet deigned to be immanent in this actual order of earth. That witness of religion attained the fulness of its expression in Christianity. In Christ that redemptive power has been revealed in its universal immanence in things. In Him religion ceased to be the mere belief, on the accidental word of a solitary teacher, that the power was there. It became the assured revelation of that power as the true key to the secret of universal life. In Christianity the world we know, the world of actual human life, is at once the theatre and the instrument of redemptive spirit. And Christianity is therefore above all things else the discipline by which spirit enters into its full redemptive power, the discipline of active faith in the crude material with which we have to work, the hard and patient discipline through which alone we shall ever be able to discover the invisible things of God where alone they can

be revealed to us, viz., "in the things that are made."

Third Sunday in Lent.

"The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."—*Rom. viii.* 19.

"Nature is cruel, man is sick of blood." So says Matthew Arnold in that sonnet from which I have already quoted. It is the ultimate expression of a disharmony which declared itself with the beginnings of conscious life upon this planet. Thus the conscious always fronts the unconscious. And it seems as if the opposition between the two must always grow more acute and determined. Consciousness is from the first the sense of a self which is the subject of pleasure and pain. And from the first it recoils instinctively from everything in which it does not detect a like consciousness. Life recoils from the lifeless, and it recoils still more from having to deal with the lifeless. So great, indeed, is that recoil that life cannot quite persuade itself that anything with which it has customarily to deal is lifeless. And so from the beginning man, in his instinctive recoil from the unconsciousness of Nature, attributed to it a quasi-consciousness, a will of evil or of good, by turns a malignant or a beneficent disposition towards himself. Nature might be kind or she might be cruel, but in either case she was less terrible than in those rare moments, which became

less rare as man's reflective power deepened, when she seemed merely indifferent to his fate.

Now it is only in quite modern times that the habit of reflection has become quite general among us. Even those for whom it is not an individual necessity are surrounded and penetrated by the view of things to which, through those for whom it is a necessity, it bears witness. And we shall not be far wrong, I think, if we say that that view implies a rooted indifference on the part of nature to all those aims and values in virtue of which we are men. Our aims are moral aims. We cannot exclude from any purpose which, however momentarily, we make our own, the sense of right and wrong. And the values by which we ultimately measure every experience and every acquisition are moral values. Things do not exist for us apart from that rightness and wrongness. Yet here is nature, apparently denying our standards, rather, contemptuously flouting them. She seems to say to us: "Whether you like it or not, I exist for you. With me you will have to do to the trump of doom. And I care nothing for the values you cherish, the standards you apply. The life you consider most precious is nothing more to me than that which you grieve over as most worthless. I know nothing either of your grief or of your satisfaction. Let any life get in the way of my necessary movement and I will grind it to powder. The only hope for you is to pluck the heart out of my mystery, and to accommodate yourselves to its implacable decrees. If you cannot

do that, it is not my fault, nor suppose for a moment that it is any care of mine. I have my own purpose to fulfil, and your value to me is measured solely by what you can contribute to that purpose. Of the quixotic values which it amuses you to apply to your own life I know nothing and for them I care nothing. And, indeed, I ought not to flatter you by the assumption that you are individually necessary to me at all. In practice I neither make nor honour any such supposition. I need to practise no economy of the individual forms which my creative force may produce. For my force is not merely creative, it is re-creative. With the red rain of the battlefield I make the harvest grow more fruitfully. The violence of my travail may shake a city into ruins and wipe out its whole population. But what matters it to me since the hidden creatures of my womb have been released, and the portion of earth which one of your cities had once oppressed with its seriousness and self-importance is now rioting in the gay and wanton luxuriance of vegetation which seems to you so purposeless? From your point of view I may seem a thoughtless or even a malignant spendthrift. From my own, which after all is the only point of view that matters since I am the universe of things, I have never wasted anything. My force renews itself, and that is all it needs to do or aims at doing."

So it is that nature seems to speak to us in our day. I would suggest that just because she does speak to us so perversely, because she poses

her riddle with such inexorable heartlessness, she may be doing us a service. She may be providing the very discipline which our faith requires for its deepening and increase. The faith of which I speak is indeed a radical, a permanent, an ever-increasing revolt against the apparent heartlessness and moral indifference of nature. It is that faith which constitutes man. And that faith insists that there is heart and moral intent at the very centre of things, that all things are through heart and moral intent, that they exist in order to become the satisfaction of a perfect Heart, the fulfilment of a perfect end of good. That faith is given with us, it is given in us. We are, indeed, but its instruments. It is something which was before humanity in order that humanity might be by partaking in it. Whatever may be the conscious affirmations or denials through which men express the beliefs by which they really live, analyse them and you will find that they bear witness in some measure to men's faith in an end of goodness and mercy. There are times when theoretically we do not even attempt to justify such a faith. But there has never been a moment when men were able to dispense with it in practice. Yet it is obvious that that faith has had a history, that it has needed a stern discipline in order to grow; and it is just that discipline which I would find in the resistance of Nature. Let us think again for a moment of the beginnings of self-conscious life. That consciousness began, as I have said, in the sense of a self which could be pleased and

could be pained, which actively sought to be pleased and shrank from being pained. In that early stage of human consciousness the world was but a sum of forces like itself which could give pleasure or inflict pain. It was a world of good and evil spirits. Man's practical endeavour was to secure for himself the beneficence of the good spirits, to appease the malignity of the evil. It was the earliest form of human religion. Suppose for a moment that man could have succeeded in his attempt to deal with nature on these terms, and consider the result. His spiritual nature could never have developed. His self-consciousness would for ever have remained at that primitive stage of mere self-concern in which the immediate individual good was sought and the immediate individual pain exorcised. But fortunately he could not be successful. The implacable world-order was there, defiant of his conjuring, obstinately irresponsive to all his magic. Bit by bit he was forced into an assurance of something different in kind between himself and the world of nature. What had once seemed to him an occasional and partial hostility to be appeased was now beginning to appear something far more terrible—a permanent and universal indifference to his standards. But this change of view proved to be spiritual gain instead of loss. For the sense of separation from nature forced him into a fuller sense of kinship with his fellows. Only in a large and generous alliance with one another could men assert the claims of spirit against the hard mechanism which more and more

they were realizing nature was. And so that alliance was deepened and extended. Pain and pleasure were enlarged far beyond the limits of the conscious self. They came to be generalized into satisfactions and sufferings which were broadly human. The human alliance against nature's spiritual indifference produced, too, the sense of responsibility to a whole world of spirit, to spirit as man could feel the intimate nature of its claims and measure sympathetically something of its scope in his fellow-man. All the widening reach of conscience grew in that interplay of spirits bound in the great league which became more and more necessary if they were to remain spirits, if they were to assert vitally what they felt it more and more necessary to assert—the infinite distance between life and mechanism. Men came at last to feel that the highest witness to the nature of perfect spirit which they could attain was to be found in the ideal of life which would at once attract and satisfy all that they knew to be best in themselves. They had learned that the Perfect Spirit was not given here in any static result such as the world for all its ceaseless change seems to be, but in a dynamic moral force working through all this instrumental scheme of things to an issue which is beyond all our imaginings, but whose character at least is witnessed to in the upward strain of the spirit of man. The faith of man must look away from the world of static forces our science knows to find God, and yet if that world had not been there with its seeming insistence

upon its own indifference to all that would satisfy us, our spirits might never have forged the wings with which they must try to scale Heaven.

And just on the level of our ordinary everyday experience is it not a certain hardness in things that makes us? Without that resistance of an alien force indifferent to our hopes and fears, our spirits, we feel here and now, could never reach the full measure of their self-consciousness. If satisfaction had come easily to them, they might have drowsed for ever in their lotus-land. And their dream of the gods would have been accordant with that mood of lazy enjoyment and refined detachment from all the wrong that might elsewhere deface the human world. It is the grit in the substance of things that polishes us. It is in the fire of the crucible that we are tortured into the precious and enduring metal which is worthy to become the general currency of spirit. We enter into the secret of universal life, into the intimate sympathy which makes us part of all life that is, into what men called of old the Kingdom of God, through much tribulation. It is the great lesson which is being forced home upon us by all the larger knowledge and the wider human experience of our day. We no longer trust to the saving power of jealously guarded spiritual preserves. They may still, indeed, be necessary for the special training of souls that are immature. There will always be those souls which belong, as it were, to the childhood of the race even when the race generally has attained its manhood. And for them

the special discipline will still be necessary. But it is the souls that have attained their manhood whose sympathy will detect where that discipline is needed and will be able to provide it. They themselves meanwhile must gain the strength by which they can save others in the hard, rude commerce of the common world. They must come to themselves through resistance to the alien circumstance which by resisting them has become their truest friend, their most trustworthy ally. The human spirit can no longer afford to be a forced exotic. It feels that it can only come to its perfect and natural fruitage when it grips tenaciously and courageously the hard soil of the common earth, when it trusts itself to the rough tonic vigour of the common air.

And through this hardy natural venture of spirit we are entering into a fuller knowledge of the world which is helping by its very resistance to make us. We begin to feel that the world of nature, the world which science knows, is after all but the set of conditions which universal spirit needs to come to itself. It is its self-chosen and self-appointed discipline. Our God is a God Who has abandoned His solitary greatness to come to Himself perpetually in all His creatures of change. It is His Spirit that is working through all these conditions we call earth. From one point of view, from the point of view of our intellect, which sees only from the outside, these conditions are but conditions, lifeless, indifferent, apparently hostile to us From a higher to which we are forced by

the claims of the living spirit within us, from the point of view we call faith, which feels from within the trend and eternal character of life, even the stern, cold world of our common experience becomes something more than a set of conditions. In it, too, we begin dimly to feel the travail of a spirit like our own. We are forced to lisp, in accents however childish and halting, the words which only the faith of a St. Paul could have flung out in the confidence of that assertion: — "We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." "The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." We are sure that all that is exists for the sake of, and must somehow be a contribution to, spirit: and that spirit is the unknown perfection of which the upward reach and sweep of the universal human conscience is the most adequate witness and foretaste. Our faith is the faith in an ultimate harmony. And it has attained that vision because it is rooted in conscience and finds all things that are to be the very discipline that conscience needs.

Fourth Sunday in Lent.

"Thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." — *St. Matthew v.* 26.

It is a stern and relentless sentence, yet it is only the sentence which life passes upon us every day and to which we have grown so accustomed that

we no longer feel its sternness. The whole pressure of nature against the resistance of our wills is mediated to us under the aspect of law. That pressure, we feel, is no arbitrary and haphazard hostility. It is not, indeed, hostility at all. It seems, as I said last Sunday, to be characterized rather by a complete indifference to our standards. It has no apparent desire to injure us and none to procure our advantage, but it will not shrink from doing the one or refrain from doing the other, when moved by the relentless impulse of its own being. It simply follows the law of its own necessity. And that law is infinitely exacting. No ignorance of its mandates will avail to ensure escape from their rigorous demands upon our obedience. It knows no favourites. It has no heart of pity and no will of enmity. Its last word to humanity is "Obey me, learn increasingly how to obey me, and by the necessity of my own nature I will be your faithful servant. But disobey me, and however unconscious or unintentional on your part the disobedience may be, you must pay for it to the uttermost farthing."

All this we have long since learned to take account of, and to make our account with. We invariably accommodate ourselves to the decrees of nature so far as we know them. The accommodation has become so complete that it is now part of the organised habit of life. We no longer realise how exacting nature is because we have so carefully systematised our obedience to her decrees as to have forestalled her exactingness.

We think because we are always obeying that we are not obeying at all. The more ingrained habit grows, the more it becomes unconscious of itself. It is only where we are still ignorant of the invariable habit of nature's activity or where we have imperfectly or recently learned it that we are feelingly aware of how exacting she can be. The fight with bodily disease in all its forms, the mastery of its various antecedents and occasions, are even now impressing that lesson upon us with a lively consciousness of its importance.

And the exactingness of nature repeats itself in a greater or less degree throughout the whole regulation of our life as social habit. Government, law, every form and instrument of social order, tend to become heartless things. For them individuals are so many units of social force which must take their chance in the working of the general scheme. The social scheme itself, of course, is always capable of vast improvement even from the point of view of the individual. It can be bettered so as to offer to each individual a fuller opportunity of coming to himself, of entering into the fulness of his inheritance. But when it has done all it can for him, it is only to leave him a member of a society constituted, it may be, in closer accordance with the ideal form of human society, yet of a society still, of an order which must be as impersonal as possible in its exactingness just that it may continue to be an order. And, indeed, if we come to think of it a little more closely, we shall find that society even in its

most self-reforming moods does not and cannot think of the individual in his separateness, but as a member of certain accidental groups or classes which are the heritage of its own past. It is these groups or classes which it re-arranges, and it re-arranges them always in obedience to a juster view of what its own constitution ought to be. But when it has effected this re-arrangement, it has exhausted its mandate of reform. Henceforward it must function in the old mechanical fashion, at any rate till it is driven to some new re-arrangement by some force inherent in its own constitution.

Now I accept this inexorable exactingness and impersonality of the reign of law throughout life, simply because it is the verdict of experience upon life as we know it. But I would ask you to consider what is this force so obviously inherent in the more developed phases of this life, in its specifically human phase, which will not let it rest content with what it is, which drives it on continually and with increasing urgency to self-reform. It is something which has its most perfect witness in us, in us as individuals, in us as transcending society or at least as transcending any actual society to which we belong. There is something in us which would transcend the exactingness of law. We are sure first of all that we ourselves are something more than we have ever succeeded in accomplishing, that the law which would mete out to us in exact proportion to what we have accomplished is essentially an unjust

law, that it does not satisfy that ideal of justice which is ineradicably ours. We know that when we have done anything worthy, it is after all something immeasurably less than what we aimed at doing, that the higher our conscious aim the more disappointing has the actual achievement seemed to us to be. And we know, too, that when we have done anything unworthy, it has been through a weakness which has been our familiar shame or after a conflict to which we were not equal. And if perchance we have yielded, undisturbed by any visitings of conscience, to the impulse of chance desires, we know that it was just when we were most alert to measure and most cunning to evade all the obstacles which social law had set in our path of wrongdoing. And so from every point of view we feel our individual superiority to this social law which would so exactly determine us. Either we are taking life at its level, and then we develop the mere cunning which will—often, at least—help us to evade its decrees, or we must take life at a higher level than it reeks of and then we feel its native insufficiency and injustice.

And again, if there is any good in us, we revolt against its decrees for others. We dare not treat our fellow men with that impersonal exactingness which is the very essence of society as a mechanical or habitual movement. There is a generosity in our nature which nothing will reprove, least of all our habitual denial of it. We feel that we are not giving at all if we are not giving infinitely

more than any abstract claim could warrant. It is the heart in man that gives, and the heart never gives according to measure. And again when the heart is once awake, we dare not claim all that according to some abstract scale of justice may seem to be our due. "Pay me that thou owest" is a demand which few of us would dare to enforce outside the market-place. It is just the generous heart that knows that no one can be its debtor, that it is debtor to every heart whose warmth it has ever had the privilege to feel or even only to awaken.

And it is through this force within us as individuals, a force that comes from some transcendent force beyond us, that society is impelled to that reforming of itself which is the essence of human history. And may we not hope, nay, must we not individually make it our hope and our aim, that society and its laws may come closer and closer to the individual need, that government and law if they must still act from without, if, indeed, they can never act save from without, may yet act so as to evoke and cherish all that is best in the individual and cease merely to make the attempt, necessarily futile, to restrain all that is worst in him? May we not hope that the organisation of social order must in its own interests come to learn that the means it adopts to restrain certain effects of evil are the very means which too often aggravate the evil from which the effects spring? Is it impossible to hope that government, which is the instrument of the common life,

should some day come to recognise the most elementary fact about human nature, that there is a kind of perverted nobility in it which will force it in mere revolt to become evil if it is callously and impersonally treated as evil, that the only thing that can expel evil is the patient and personal will of good, the will that men have called by the great name of love? While our legal justice, as we must still, alas! for the bitter irony of it, call it, seeks to effect its object by mere restraint and the punishment which not only degrades but aims at degrading, it must fail of its object. The weaklings of our society are those whom we can least afford to degrade, because they are often already degraded and satisfied in their degradation. They are just the lost sheep whom the Good Shepherd is leaving all the folded ones to seek until He finds, and having found will cherish with all the added love they need. Society, too, must learn to do its little measure of good shepherding, if only by making its punishment frankly human and reformatory. I am not dreaming dreams, for our consciences are alive in this matter and we are making our feeble beginnings of reform in all the educational and preventive work which society has undertaken in this generation. But I *would* dream what can only as yet be counted as dreams, and hope that society might one day be able to commit the care of its moral derelicts, at least in the first stages of their fall, not to the chance officials of a routine system, but to the most Christ-like men and women within

its borders. For this would be the noblest work the one could find to do, and perhaps the only sure hope of salvation which the others could be offered. A more righteously ordered society will do much to abolish the ugliest and most sordid forms of human evil, but the moral wastage of humanity will still be left for the Good Shepherds of humanity to seek and save.

But yet again let us remember the spiritual value of the exactingness of nature and of all life's organisation as habit. Without it our tenderness would never have become the strength that saves, our sympathy would never have gained the temper by which it answers to every varying strain of the mass in which it has to work. It is just the steady strain, the uniform urgency, of law that works the soft ore of our characters into the resisting steel which is the backbone of every human edifice. I distrust all the formulas we extract from life, useful and even necessary as they are, because they are never adequate to the whole of life and because we are so ready to treat them as if they were. But I trust absolutely the formula given in life itself, the formula according to which it works and by which it proves us. Against that formula we must measure ourselves in order to grow at all. Our education of the young, our tendance of the morally weak and immature, are but preparations for the moment when they will be able to undertake that further education of themselves. A man is not truly a man till he has begun to stand up to life, not as

his enemy, but as the necessary discipline of his spirit. It is the formula that tries our strength and makes it. That is the reason that even the abstract formulas which our own partial experience has framed, our Ten Commandments and the like, have their value in the stage of mere preparation. But they can only prepare us for the moment when we must measure ourselves against the formula inwoven in the texture of life itself. The learning what that formula can teach us is as various as our various characters, nor will it abate one jot or tittle of its special lesson for each. That is the law of liberty through which alone we can be fully made. And the liberty into which we thus enter recognises as its charter that word which at first sight seems so sinister and forbidding, "Thou shalt not come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing."

Fifth Sunday in Lent.

"How much more shall the blood of Christ Who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God."—
Hebrews ix. 14.

You remember, perhaps, another aspect of the contrast between man and nature on which Matthew Arnold insists. Nature, he says, fears no death; while man would be with safe conscience blest. Was there not present to the mind of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews some glimpse of the same contrast when he wrote these

words ? Death is an unregarded episode in the unrolment of nature's heartless drama. For nature the individual has no prescriptive rights in life. He is but the temporary medium of her only less temporary purpose. Life is given to him that he may reconstitute it in a fresh variety of aspect and then transmit it to others to be by them constituted anew in still further variety. He does not possess life, he is only possessed by it. When nature has sucked him dry of all usefulness, she flings him into her great smelting furnace to be moulded into some new instrument of her unceasing energy. She does not know death, and therefore she does not fear it. But neither does she know life. She, too, is only possessed by it, and with her it is an unconscious possession. She lives not to know, but to energise blindly, mechanically, without hope and without fear.

And in the midst of this unconscious Nature we are set, informed by a consciousness which is in permanent and determined revolt against the blindness of her decrees. In spite of her we persist in believing that we possess life and are not merely possessed by it. We know life face to face, and therefore we fear death. That fear is man's most abiding instinct, because it is the fear of losing that self-consciousness through which alone he is. Nature functions as an instrument. Her life claims no character other than the instrumental. She knows no wistful looking before and after. She could perish to-morrow without pain. But man can never be satisfied with being an instrument.

He has looked, through however dark a glass, into the innermost mysteries of being. He has seen, nay, he has intimately touched, values in life which transcend time and its changes. And it is because those values have been revealed in him that he fears death, that he shrinks from it as the last and most impossible cruelty. He has gazed into the face of life as it is in its changeless reality, and he would be transformed into the image of its glory. Whatever would menace the integrity of that hope is to him a thing of dread.

And yet man knows that he is an instrument; and that he is an instrument of that very nature against whose blind decrees he is in instinctive revolt. Nay, all his knowledge but leads him to a clearer perception of that instrumental character of his life. In whatever circumstances he may be placed, whatever the form or the direction of his energy, he feels that he is but executing the behests of that great sum of forces which we call nature. He is inextricably involved in her rigid determinism. The peculiar qualities of his individual power are but a result of her necessary movement. His special opportunities of turning those powers to account are regulated by her decrees. He cannot possibly, for all his consciousness, get outside the network of her unconscious energy. The tragedy of the situation is that the conscious seems the eternal bond-servant of the unconscious, that what seems to be life in full possession of itself is but a more efficient crank in an unheeding machinery. We know that we are alive with something that

promises to be the fulness of life, we are conscious of powers which claim an eternal scope, of aims, too, which reach out somehow beyond time and the whole range of the visible order, and yet our works are dead, they are inexorably claimed by this order which grinds out its impassive and to us purposeless activities, they belong to a world which is not in any sense that can satisfy us alive. However high our hopes or large our aims, they drop to earth, they shrink into insignificance before the rebuke of this mere rational account of our relations to nature which forces itself upon us increasingly the more closely we scrutinise those relations. And so at last in mere self-defence some of those who have faced the situation with most unswerving gaze have ventured the theory that nature as we know it has a purpose, though a purpose whose mysteries we can never completely fathom, and that it is our duty to obey blindly those aspects of her purpose which it is given to us to realize, and then to accept resignedly that consignment to the scrapheap which will inevitably follow upon the exhaustion of our utilities to her.

Well, it is a solution, in its way even a religious solution. It does at least acknowledge the great law of sacrifice which life, where it has become self-conscious, always accepts and reveres. It does bear witness to the fact that the life which can and will sacrifice itself with conscious intent is already higher in the scale than the life which can only blindly impose sacrifice or demand it. It does at least point the way to the religious solution, to

that solution which man because he is naturally religious has always felt after even when he could not justify it to his intelligence, which in some form he will always hold by even though he knows he will never completely justify it to his intelligence. And if at times his intelligence has risen in revolt against some particular form which he had given to the religious solution, it was only because that form had neglected or denied some obvious fact which it ought instead to have frankly recognized. Now religion has thus suffered by obscuring or minimising the indisputable fact that we are instruments of the world-order, that we are rigidly determined by it, that our freedom must be gained within that determinism and not apart from it, that if we are instruments of a higher and transcendent order we are so through our instrumentality to the lower and the visible order. These are facts which religion must suffer by ignoring or denying. And more, it must suffer if it ignores or denies the discipline of our instrumentality to the higher order which our instrumentality to the lower always provides.

Let us look at it from this point of view. First of all, whatever we may be doing here, we know we are not serving merely some immediate and temporary end. We are, indeed, serving that most indubitably. We are providing for our own immediate needs and for the needs of those who depend on us. Those needs are in the very forefront of our consciousness. None the less, we do not serve them anyhow. There are restraints upon our

method of serving them which arise immediately in every conscious energy of the will. Those restraints may seem at first nothing more than the arbitrary decrees of the society to which we belong, motived and sanctioned by the mutual fear and distrust of its members. But no such account of them will prove for long sufficient. For there is nothing of which we grow to be more certain than that those very restraints have their ultimate sanction in ourselves, that they exist with an imperative social force because in some individuals at least who belong to that society they have already existed with a force which was still more imperative. The particular form which the restraints take may indeed be social, but the power which does restrain, and the power out of which all forms of social restraint grow, is individual. We are made so that whatever we do we cannot do it without its reacting upon us. That is the charter of our freedom. Our action tries us. In the moment of its being done, it rises up in judgment against us. However insignificant its purpose, there is something eternal in its quality. It has revealed us to ourselves. It is not a mere chance product of our instrumental activity. Not all the abstract reasoning in the world will deliver us from the sense that it is a self which could have been different, our own most intimate self which ought to have been different, that is there coined into an outer fact, henceforward a part of the world's happenings. It is in this fact of conscience that we transcend the world and all its mechanism and transcend while

serving it most unhesitatingly, while yielding ourselves most readily to the particular service which its predestined order has required of us. It is not the form of the service that makes us or mars us. With that we have very little to do. The more clearly we realize the rigid determination of the world's order, the more certain we become that with that we have nothing to do, that all that has been imposed upon us by the necessary movement of great unconscious forces. What really makes or mars us is the spirit that we put into the service and that we alone can put into it. We are spirit, spirit whose expression in us is conscience, and it is by being spirit that we transcend mechanism and are most independent of it when we most willingly accept its determinism as the vehicle through which we can reveal and make ourselves. We began by recognizing and acting on the truth, for it is a truth, that we are the instruments of Nature. We end by recognizing the higher truth that Nature is our instrument, that only in using it as our instrument can we truly make ourselves.

And here in the freedom of conscience we have reached the sense of a higher dependence, of the dependence which constitutes and guarantees this freedom of ours, of our necessary dependence upon some higher transcendent order to which this visible order we know has been all the time instrumental. Here is the secret of our real relation with this mechanical order of the world. We are the key to its mystery. It can be no key to ours.

We transcend it and use it to ends that conquer death, that affirm an eternal quality in life, by our inherence in the eternal order of spirit, an inherence which is witnessed to in the life of conscience. And that order which is inherent in us using the world as its instrument does also, we must believe, use the same world as its instrument independently of us. So the faith which is born out of the active needs of our own nature reaches at last to the vision of this apparently mechanical order which surrounds us with its rigorous determinism as the theatre of a Divine redemption, to the certainty that God is somehow immanent even in the necessary movement of His world.

So, too, we learn how nature is the actual discipline through which we attain to that faith. It is by steady, lasting revolt against her unconscious mood that our native consciousness, which is at first but an instinctive shrinking from death, but a self-regarding assertion of the claim of life to persist, becomes at last the conscience which has conquered death, which feels that what is eternal in life is independent of all its temporary change and loss, and can only be achieved by sitting grandly loose to all its temporary fortunes. Is not that the secret of Christ as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews had realized it ? In Him conscience had been purified to its perfect quality by the unhesitating acceptance of all the cost its service demanded. He made no attempt to accomplish His mission by escaping from the conditions which the world-order imposed. And so He proved that

the work of a human soul at its best ceases to be a part of the dead mechanism which determines it and becomes a veritable service of the God Who is Life in its eternal perfection. So, too, He lifted the soul of man into its assurance of permanent communion with the Eternal Spirit. Through life informed by His Spirit we too can most surely attain to the blessedness of a safe conscience, of a conscience purified to recognize in the very work that seems most dead and mechanical the authentic occasions of the service of the God in Whom is our deathless life.

Sunday Next Before Easter.

"He took upon Him the form of a servant."—*Philippians ii.* 7.

During these Sundays in Lent I have been trying to indicate the discipline of our deeper and more permanent life which is provided for by the fact of our being involved in what is apparently a necessary and morally indifferent process. It is this process that I have ventured to call nature, not because it is the full account of the nature of things but because it is that aspect of their nature of which we are most immediately and generally aware. That aspect of things has its discipline for us, and it is only by using its discipline that we can come to transcend itself and to reach another view of things in which they seem to beat in varying measure and degree with a life like our

own. This, too, I have attempted, however feebly, to indicate. I have tried to show how the soul, disciplined by the refractoriness of things, does at last and inevitably attain to the faith that that refractory life is itself informed by a purpose, and that, however little we may be able to define it it is a purpose like that which is working in our own spirits.

To-day I would gather up what I have been saying under a fresh aspect. Let us turn from the routine character of what we ordinarily call nature to the routine element in human life itself. The first reflection to which we are impelled is how large an area of our life is and must be dominated by routine. It is only, indeed, by this wide empire of mere habit that the necessary economy of spirit is procured and maintained. Think how barren of high aim and far-reaching endeavour our life would be if we had to put much active thought and will into every purpose that claims our energy. Think indeed, how barren of these things our life is made where that necessity still exists, where it is necessary, for instance, to intrigue and scheme for the mere means of living, where men have to live daily from hand to mouth. Or think again how impossible it would be for human activity to develop if the initial processes of that activity had not become with us an acquired, almost automatic, habit. The human spirit is released into the possibility of its wider energies only because its living power grows out of the roots of habit.

But even this realization of the large area of our life which is controlled by habit and of the part which habit plays in procuring and maintaining the due economy of active spirit is by no means a full account of the matter. When we look at it a little more closely, we find that every activity of our life is determined by routine. Wherever we are, whatever we do, we start from a habit which is not individual at all but a heredity of the race, or rather of that part of the race to which we belong. The long effort of centuries has hardened into a subsoil of habit into which our roots must strike, into which they do strike by an instinct of their own nature. This instinct of initial accommodation is the secret of our life, the secret of all that is most original and individual in it, as well as of all that is most general. We are most fortunate, we feel, when that which we find to do is the thing for which our natural equipment had fitted us. But when we set ourselves to do even that, we are not free in the sense that we can impose the wholeness of our conception upon a perfectly formless matter. It is, indeed, an illusion of all youthful enthusiasm that it can do so. It dreams of imposing the integrity of its idea upon a world which is there just to be shaped to its pattern. For it the world is a perfectly plastic substance waiting to be moulded into that perfect form which it has conceived. But even the most youthful ardour soon discovers that the world has already a form which has been given to it by the labour of all the past, a form which though once

new and strange has now grown into a settled habit of its being. It finds that that form is stubbornly recalcitrant to all change and that it is necessary to work gradually and patiently along its general lines if it is to be persuaded to accept the change which is desirable and even necessary. And not only is it only so that change can be wrought at all, but this power of the existing form has also an important part to play in the making of that other power which will one day alter it. The necessity of apprenticeship is the universal witness to this power of the past in making the power of the future. We must be deeply rooted in the past if we would alter it. The thinker who does not know profoundly all that has been most significant and of most permanent worth in the thought of the past will never contribute much that will really help towards the making of the thought of the future. The scientist who has not painfully followed the gains of past science and made them thoroughly his own will bring to science no new gains of his own. Even the artist, who may seem to work by the very nature of his inspiration in an atmosphere of greater freedom, cannot succeed in mastering all the resources of his own individual inspiration without a steady and laborious discipline in every significant detail of the method which the art of the past has left as its legacy. All this is so apparent that it accounts of itself for that conservative tendency which experience evokes and accentuates in us all. We feel that all that is habitual and established in life

has made us, that it has given us not only the aptitude by which alone we can hope to work successfully upon life, but also the instinctive sympathy with its needs which will enable us to devise fresh and really fruitful ways of subserving them.

Yet this conservative tendency may so easily overstep the due limits of its influence. The past is there to discipline us, not to enslave us, to enrich and solidify our individual quality of power, not to impoverish and sterilise it into a mere mimicry. The true conservatism is but the necessary jumping ground of the progressive spirit, and life knows so little of such conservatism. Instead of making sure of life and all that it has been in order to live more fully, we so often master its gains in order that we may remain inactive, or, what is the same thing for the active spirit, in order that we may go on repeating mechanically the processes to which it has impelled us. And the tragedy of it is that then we have not mastered its gains at all, and worse still, that we shall never discover our failure to master them. We have mastered nothing vital which does not become vitally fruitful in us and through us. And without that vital fruitfulness we do not even see life. The vision of the present is denied us as the inevitable penalty of our ape-like mimicry of the past. There is no living force of moral imagination to open our eyes that we might see. We look out of sightless eyes on a world of moral accident, or rather on a world of fixed non-moral habitude.

For us there is no call to the things that might be, no accusing sense of the fruits that cannot ripen because we are sapless branches on the tree of life. This is not to respect the past. It is to degrade and annul it. If it is well for us that the life of the past has grown so established and habitual that it can give us stability and root us in real things, it is well also, it is a sacred and imperative duty, that we should become the living organs without which that past will know no future fruition.

Is the human world moving towards a recognition of the law of its own progress? Is it beginning to learn that the past becomes a habit to every present in order that the future may grow out of it the more easily and the more naturally? Or is it still content to stand divided in two impotent sections, those who cling to the past without any thought of making a future out of it, and those who would build a future in the air without foundations in the solid earth of the past? Is the stupidity of inertia to provoke the frenzy of revolution, and revolution in its haste and instability to recoil into the timid obstinacy of reaction, and the clumsiness of this vicious circle to be treated as the normal method of human progress, when, if we but opened our eyes and our hearts to the natural and appointed discipline of our life, we might achieve the progress that life requires at our hands, if not without difficulty, at least without barbarous cruelty and appalling waste?

The hope that we may come some day to learn the lesson that we so much need to learn is not merely that our rational intelligence of the real method of progress is gaining increasing certainty and force, though that is a reasonable ground of hope. But it is still more hopeful that the Christian religion, the religion of Jesus Christ, seems to be entering upon a new era of fruitful energy in which men will learn the real secrets of its witness to the method of the soul's growth. For what is the witness of that religion? It is that to be the redeeming power of human life God must endure the discipline of human life. He must acquire redeeming skill within the life He is to redeem. He must learn the intimate feel of all that has become habitual in human life if He would be equal to giving it the power of breaking out of the slavery of its own habit into the freedom of spirit. "He took upon Himself the form of a servant," says St. Paul of Him of Whom he has already said that "He was in the form of God." That is the witness of Christianity the full range of which we are at last beginning to appreciate. In the illuminated conscience, wherever the conscience is alert and faithful, God's power is rooted in the hard crust of human habit and is extracting from it its spiritual fruitfulness. We know nothing of the supernatural save as it works in the natural. Its manifestation as a power in and over human life depends upon its discipline in and through human life.

And so at last we come to gain a new conception of what the natural really is. We feel that the

supernatural cannot grow out of an alien soil, that its fruits cannot be nourished by an alien sap. We feel that what we call the natural must be itself but a past achievement of the supernatural grown now into an instinctive habit of life. That hardening of the immediate activity of spirit into habit is at once a strength and a weakness, an opportunity and a temptation. On the one hand, it is the opportunity which spirit finds to advance with certainty from its victories of the past to its victories of the future. On the other, it is the temptation to slackness, to self-abandonment, to the mere habitual repetition which is the dissolution of spirit. The temptation is so urgent, so instinctive, so universally besetting, that we fail to recognize the opportunity. It is the most fatal of all mistakes. For the natural, the supernatural achievement of the past now embedded in the life of things as their almost necessary habit, affords the only discipline through which the free spirit can temper and possess its strength for the conquest of the future.

Thoughts on the Temptation

"Sint ergo tentationes, sint tribulationes; consummaris eis, non consumeris. Si enim recusares tentationem, recusares refectionem. Ergo reficeris, in manibus artificis es.— S. AUGUSTINE - *Enarratio in Psalmum xcix.*

Thoughts on the Temptation

Friday Evenings in Lent.

I.

There is no surer mark of the ferment of the Divine Nature in man, of its patient and unconquerable purpose to make itself felt in him, than the fact that he is tempted. We have a strange habit of debasing words against which their original meaning persists as a protest. It is so with the word temptation or its equivalent, trial. We have quite forgotten that it witnesses to an active energy of our own and not merely to something which we have to endure. It witnesses to the fact that we try quite as much as to the fact that we are tried. For, indeed, we could not be tried at all if we were not trying. It is only the aspiring soul that feels all the weight of the old earth drawing it down. It is when we are honestly striving to conquer our lower selves that they disclose all their strength and beset us with all their shrewdest wiles. If we could cease to make the effort to rise spiritually, we should cease to know what temptation means because we should have ceased to feel it.

We need not be surprised, then, at our Lord's temptation. Indeed, to deny the reality of His temptation would be altogether to deny His

humanity. And if that aspect of His experience had not been presented to us, there would have been nothing to prove that He was man at all. For whatever else man may be or experience, he is not man unless he feels the tug of temptation. It is no mere incident of life, no accidental condition to which we may have occasionally to submit, but from which we may finally hope to escape. We miss the very meaning of the thing so long as we think of it merely as a hostile force assailing us from without. That force indeed is there, but its existence and its hostility would never have been suspected by us if we were not what we are, living spirits whose one need is to assert ourselves, to grow, whose real and lasting satisfaction is to emerge from the lower into the higher. And so it is that the strongest souls have their temptations like the weakest, perhaps more than the weakest, that Christ can be tempted more and more continuously than we. For we may well believe, indeed I think we cannot help believing, that the temptations recorded in our brief narrative in the Gospels are but a typical instance of the temptations which our Lord experienced all His life through, which He experienced in virtue of being what He was. We know little of our own nature if we do not realize how constant and how uniform are the temptations by which we are assailed. They may be intermittent, but they reappear in the same forms, and that because the character which experiences them, which by its own growth elicits their force, preserves its constant type

throughout its growth. And if in our Lord's case we should hesitate to think of temptation as recurring, the narrative itself reminds us that the devil left Him but for a season.

But what I wish principally to insist upon now is that strong natures are exposed to their special temptations. We know something of the temptations of the weak. At least we see them oftentimes overborne by the victorious assaults of evil. We are easily impressed by this obvious tragedy of the wreck of a human life. In our natural pity at the pathetic misery of it all, we lay the blame on circumstances, we talk lightly or bitterly, as it may be, about the victim of an overpowering temptation, as if temptation were some external force. And it is at least well when this humiliating sense that we share in the same disabilities, that we ourselves might just as readily be the victims, induces in us the judgment of mercy and of pity. It is better than that we should deceive and harden ourselves in the presence of such failure into a harsh and self-righteous condemnation. Yet our pity is not so intelligent as it might be. There is something unmanly and even a little unreal in our picture of the victim of an external temptation. There is something much more pathetic than the attraction of evil or than the failure it has wrought. It is the fact that the victim has not known it as evil, that he has not felt the temptation of it, or has not felt it enough. I do not, of course, speak of those instances of an abnormal nature which seem to make resistance to temptation, however

keenly felt, almost hopeless. Before such tragedies we can only fold our hands in a listless awe. But to the ordinary nature failure comes, if it comes, because the temptation has not been felt or has not been felt as it might have been. That is the real tragedy of our weakness. It is the tragedy of moral torpor, of an anæmic conscience, of a nature which has not enough consistency and substance to feel the stress of temptation working in it. To feel temptation, and to feel it strongly, is our only chance of resisting it and attaining safety through resistance. There is no surer test of our growth in real manhood than our sensitiveness to temptation. There is no greater or more subtle danger than the tendency to take our ease in Zion or out of it.

But the strong nature, too, has its special temptations. It is one of the things which we learn and which it is most important for us to learn from this story of the Gospels. What they are we shall see as we scrutinise more closely this drama of Divine temptation, of God committing Himself to the risks and the limitations of human growth. To-day let us content ourselves with thinking of the fact which that story reveals. We sometimes think when we concentrate our regard on some eminent figure, on someone who has bulked largely in human history, whose influence has been deeply and widely felt, that here at least life has moved swiftly and easily to its appointed end. We feel as if temptation had played no appreciable part in such a life, that it

has been sustained in a lofty and unfailing serenity by the sense of its high mission. Opposition from without, indeed, it may have had to face, and in much greater proportion than other lives. But we think of it as having largely escaped all that torturing sense of inner division which we know so well in ourselves. There is much in such a life that seems to warrant this view of it. It seems nobly self-sufficient, it bears itself in a majestic silence and loneliness, it does not halt to explain itself, it utters no outcry of expostulation against circumstance, it makes no appeal for appreciation and sympathy, when it moves it moves swiftly and deliberately towards its end. Yet we are deceived if we think that in the midst of that self-contained silence there is no struggle. The story of our Lord's temptation is the light which penetrates that darkness of the unknown and lets us see something of the reality which has there lain hidden from our gaze. Every step forward is beset with doubt. The will is dizzied with the intoxication of past success. Such men feel the whirl in the brain that comes of their lonely altitude on some pinnacle of fame or power. They know the temptation to fling themselves out into the void of some daring experiment, of some impossible venture. Their very distance from the common earth on which we lesser men move in safety is their danger. They are tempted to be careless of those everyday supports which all men alike need, and to trust themselves to what the evil spirit of pride and self-sufficiency whispers in

the ear of their lonely hearts is the special care of God. After all, we weaker men are in less danger, because if we feel temptation less in its personal stress, we feel it at least as it is recognized by the great common body of opinion. The grosser evil we are saved from because everyone about us recognizes it for what it is. But how often the man of lonely strength has failed to realize the special temptation which beset him there apart, and has come tumbling down into the grossness of earth. Where we walk with safety, he has been dashed to hopeless destruction. Or just because he has realized the greatness of his mission, he has been tempted to force results or to procure them by unworthy means. It is in the midst of such temptations that the strong will and the great heart have to work. And the danger is that they may fail to realise that these are temptations. There is nothing which so deceives us sometimes as the sense of mission, the certainty that we have been called to do something great and notable, and the consciousness that our supreme and controlling desire is to do it. We may easily reach the point where we think that the end justifies the means, where we lose all sense of the need of a wholesome self-distrust, where we come to act as if we were not God's responsible messengers but His deputies, furnished with plenary powers. It is a temptation perhaps more rarely of individuals than of societies, but it is a temptation which, when unnoticed and unfelt, and therefore yielded to, becomes the most fatal

betrayal of the cause of God. We cannot help noticing how the greatest evil in the world has been wrought, not by the gross lusts of men, which seem to be naturally countered by something sane and purifying in the general social instinct, but by the unintentional and often quite unsuspected treachery of a good man to the ideal for which he stood or of a society to the righteous purpose which it represented. The Church, for instance, has never intrigued for power or burked the truth, or been blind to it, in the sincere belief that it was helping to advance God's cause of righteousness, but it has endangered and weakened the influence of religion over the whole area of its sway.

And the story of our Lord's temptation helps us most just in forcing us to see that these things are temptations, in bringing home to the best men that they too are tempted and that they are tempted in this way. To recognize a temptation for what it is is already to be on the way to overcome it. It was because our Lord was tempted in reality, because He felt these natural movements of the inner man, and felt them as denials of the true nature of God and of the methods of His action, that He was able to resist them with such assurance and to overcome them so effectually. The word of God, the knowledge of God's will, increases among men with each fresh realization in some lonely soul that old and established ways of reaching the righteous end are morally insufficient and unworthy, that to use them any longer would be a

denial of God, that they have become a temptation which we must resist if we would grow towards the fulness of the stature of spiritual manhood. It is not so much fuller knowledge of the end which God has set us to reach that we need, as fuller knowledge of the way by which alone it can be reached. Every lonely triumph of a righteous soul is a correction of the way. It makes plain the path to be trodden by those who follow them on the march to the city of God. Every soul that has felt the attractive ease of the old paths a temptation, that has struck out a new and a better path, has become a way of the truth of life. It was thus that Christ was *the* way of the truth of life. He recognised the perfect way. He felt the attraction of the beaten track. Its delusive promise of easy success awoke an instinctive echo in His heart. But He resisted it as the supreme temptation, and He overcame. So men recognised in Him the supreme revelation of God, the very God of very God. Our metaphysical attempts to explain His Divinity are losing their meaning for us or are giving us at best but a dim and confused apprehension of what we mean. But in the fact that He felt the supreme temptation, and because He felt it was able to overcome, He demonstrated not only His human kinship with us, but also His Divinity in a way which as we try to follow Him we shall grow more and more to understand.

II.

Our Lord's baptism was His self-consecration to a great mission. Through the long, silent years of His life as a Galilean villager the sense of mission had grown and deepened. Yet when the echo of John's stern call ringing throughout the land proclaimed to Him at length that the hour had come, He did not even then accept His preparation as complete. He did not emerge from the waters of Jordan to proclaim forthwith His special message, to undertake forthwith His special mission. On the contrary, He was called by the Spirit within Him, by the Spirit which directed His whole life, to a more searching preparation still. In the graphic phrase of St. Mark's Gospel, "immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness." For the wilderness is the strong soul's natural home. There it proves itself, it enters into possession of itself, it learns its own powers and gains accurate and trustworthy knowledge of its mission. It is cut off from the thousand natural supports which ordinarily sustain it, from the magnetic enthusiasm of the multitude, from the ardent responsive affection of disciples, even from the tonic opposition which it has to meet in the world of men. In loneliness it has to prove and secure a greater support, a support which will enable it to control the forces with which it will have to deal, which will deliver it from the danger of being controlled by them. The bracing discipline of the desert is the strong soul's most immediate instinct when it

would prepare itself for the effective fulfilment of its task, and it is also its most necessary experience. But it is exactly in this experience that its greatest danger lies. It is here that it will be exposed to the fiercest assaults of temptation, to temptations which lie in the realization of its power. In those forty days of the story our Lord reached the certainty of His Divine Sonship, but in reaching it He found that the temptation to misunderstand its nature and to abuse its power was drawing near and suggesting itself to His eager will. He felt Himself drawn to revel in its power rather than to follow patiently the true law of its power, to treat it as a privilege which might be forced rather than as a responsibility whose conditions were to be arduously mastered and obeyed. And from the clinging coils of that temptation He delivered Himself with the great word of His soul's innermost certainty, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

It must always seem a kind of wanton presumption to try to read the secret of so transcendent an experience as our Lord's temptation. But the presumption lies at least in the fact that our own temptations are so infinitely less in degree, not in the fact that they are different in kind. And just because He was in all things tempted like as we are, we shall always be forced, in spite of ourselves and in spite of the meaner forms under which temptation presents itself to our wills, to make the attempt. And perhaps we can best do so by

thinking of the temptations to which all conspicuous human force is exposed. And first of all we shall find, I think, that the temptation of the strong will comes to it through its strength. Our defects as a rule are not something apart from our qualities, something contrasted with them and balancing them. They are something in our qualities, a tendency which accompanies every exercise of them, conscious or unconscious. It is that which makes them so insidious and yet makes it possible for us to hope to conquer them. Let us think, for instance, of the man who has felt the call to do anything notable in the world, who feels within himself the strength to do it. He becomes of necessity what we call individual. However much he may have learned from others, he tends more and more to make it his own. His most insistent need is to sift and try every opinion that comes to him from without, to measure it by his own inexorable standard, to transmute it into something which bears the stamp of his own individuality. There is something incommunicable about every certainty by which he lives. He does not discuss because he does not feel the need of discussion, because he is so sure of what he wants to do and why he wants to do it. The opinion of the multitude does not affect him. The light veering winds of popular feeling do not disturb the fixed set of his will. He is built on the rock of a great inner certainty. He carries about with him in the midst of a peopled world the atmosphere of the desert. And it is not that he is naturally indifferent to or

contemptuous of the convictions or the sentiment of others. It is just such a nature that can be most just to what others feel and think. But he has to listen to the inner call and to follow it. His own special power has withdrawn him into himself for the inspiration which he needs. He cannot fulfil the mission which he feels has been committed to him except on the terms of a stern denial of all that, however permissible or worthy in itself, would conflict with it. And as he thus withdraws into himself, the sense of his own peculiar power possesses him. It becomes a kind of familiar spirit. The moment of his temptation has arrived. There is nothing to correct his titanic self-confidence. It is all the more dangerous to him that he does not regard it as self-confidence at all, that he treats his own certainty as the voice of God. He knows that his purpose has grown in the long, lonely agony of self-limitation, that he has kindled it into a glowing mass in the fire of his own heart and beaten it into shape on the anvil of his will. He thinks he can trust it to be indeed the will of God for him and through him. And yet it has become his temptation. He has come, he hardly knows how, to delight in the mere exercise of his power. He finds himself tempted to rule for the mere pleasure of ruling, when he ought to rule only for the service that his rule can render. He feels the temptation to forget the nature of the stuff on which he has to work, the conditions on which alone it can be turned into fruitfulness, and to force the results

he seeks by some act of dazzling power which will prove to himself and to others the reality of his mission. It is the most insidious form in which pride can assail a man, the pride of human power which would compass immediately in the name of God the works of God's slow and patient process. But perhaps the most dangerous element in such a temptation is not this desire of power to revel in its own exercise, to drain the intoxicating draught of immediate and dazzling success. There is in it an element less suspected and more insidious still. In the midst of the greatest self-confidence there is a lurking fear. It is just the lonely certainty that knows at times the torture of the suspicion that its faith may after all be a delusion. Who is there that cannot sympathise with Luther in those moments of paralysing hesitation when the question came to him, "Can I be right and the whole of Christendom wrong?" The word which our Lord recognized as a spirit of evil in His heart was, "*If* Thou be the Son of God." The certainty of the native impulse contends with the reasoned distrust of it. We feel the individual glow of strength, the individual sense of mission, and yet the cold, sceptical mood of reason suggests the question, "Are we after all different from others? May we not be cherishing a fatal delusion? May it not be a phantom mission which we are pursuing?" And in response to such doubts the masterful strength and purpose assert themselves again in a determination to put themselves once and for all to the proof, to establish themselves so con-

clusively that reason may never again be able to challenge them.

But the temptation has to be put aside by him who would serve God truly and effectually. The Son of God, the faithful servant, is not he who has snatched the power of God beforehand, but he who acquires it slowly and painfully in the hard school of His service. St. Paul had penetrated to the very secret of our Lord's temptation and of His victory over it when he said of Him that He had not thought it a thing to be grasped at to be equal with God, but had instead taken upon Himself the form of a servant and humbled Himself even to the death of the Cross. God does not force the results which He wills, but deepens and strengthens the spirit of life which will naturally produce them. Indeed, the end towards which He works cannot be forced, it cannot be reached by miraculous short-cuts. For it is not an end independently of our life. It is the end *of* our life, the perfect expression of lives that have been daily nourished by the power and the will of God, that are fed by every word that proceedeth out of His mouth. The world would not be God's if stones could miraculously be made bread, if there were no known process to accept and to follow, if life were the immediate assertion of power and not, as in fact it is, its slow acquisition, if there were no possibility of mistake and failure and unfaithfulness and ultimate recovery. We all desire the satisfying bread of material results, and it is right that we should. We want to see goodness

established in material forms, in institutions, in methods and ideas which have become a social habit so that we can grasp and use them, in the laws and customs which constitute societies. We want to see the Kingdom of Heaven growing up without us. But there is one condition on which alone our desire can be realised. It must first grow up within. We must each of us learn to feed on the bread of life, to learn the slow lesson of obedience to the good that will lead us into the higher good, to live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

III.

THERE is nothing which so tries a man as the vision of great possibilities. And this vision always accompanies the sense of mission, or rather it is the sense of mission—at least as it first comes to the man who experiences it. It is not so much the certainty of what he has to do and can do that first comes to him as the certainty that he can do something great and notable. It is the instinctive reach of his energy of which he is aware long before he has put its quality to the proof or learned where best to apply it. It is right and natural that it should be so. Power must reach out before it can consolidate itself within. It needs the glory of the outer vision before it can test its own worth. Ambition has its generous and educative side, and without it no great career and no good life would be possible. The man who wants to be good or great will take his world along with him. Or

rather he will claim of his ideal world that it should take him along with it. It is indeed true that religion and all ideal interests have their moments of contraction as well as their moments of expansion. There are times when the good life seems without hope save in itself, when to be good it must withdraw itself from the actual world of which it despairs. But even then it is the vision of an ideal world which has driven it to that despair of the actual. And despair is not the natural note of life. It is the involuntary echo of the outer discords striking across the soul's inner harmony. The soul lives by its hopes, hopes which can be its own only because they extend far beyond itself. The very essence of religion is the vision of a world whose discords are being resolved into an ultimate harmony. It is the glimpse of a new heaven and a new earth that both works the soul's renewal and witnesses to it. The piecemeal effort of the social reformer is possible because he has seen a world transfigured by the glistening light of universal justice. Every new human movement towards a fuller truth or a larger right is the rhythmic dance of inspired feet before the ark of the covenant. It is the music of the spheres that leads it on. Humanity is once again on the Mount of Transfiguration, and those who have eyes to see it whisper their gratitude in hushed tones of awe, " It is well for us to be here."

But this vantage-point of the awakened soul is also the mountain of the temptation. It beholds therefrom all the kingdoms of the world and the

glory of them. And that vision has its dangers. So often what ought to inspire only tempts us. We want to possess where we ought to serve. We would clutch at the result where we can only help to establish the process which would surely lead to it. Is it not the account of the failure of every human endeavour which has sprung out of high hopes and a generous purpose? The man who finds he can lead others is exposed to a double temptation. He is tempted by the peculiar quality of his power and by what he soon finds to be the character of the material with which he has to deal. In himself there is always a certain element of unconscious masterfulness. He is driven to act by a force which is beyond his own control, or which at least it is difficult for him to keep under complete control. His judgment labours haltingly to keep pace with his mad rage for action. And even when he tries his hardest to measure for himself every step he takes, he is often constitutionally unable to convey to those whose cooperation he demands the secrets of his and their action. Nature has laid upon his soul the spell of an obstinate silence. But his chief temptation lies in the nature of the stuff which he has to handle. What such a man needs in order to bring out all that is truly great in him is the hard, stern conflict of his equals, the opposition which would sift and purify him. But unfortunately for him he wields an easy influence over lesser men. They feel the fascination of his strength, they yield all too readily to the mere hypnotism of his abounding will. They are

of those who endure moral force gladly, who choose to be led whither another wills. They become the blind instruments of a power which is already in danger through its own instinctive eagerness. They help to infuriate its lust of moral dominance. They sharpen the edge of its headlong pride. They take an unconscious revenge for the moral force which he has imposed upon them by communicating to him in turn the murky passion of their own narrow prejudice. There is no greater treachery to a good cause than this yielding to the lust of moral domination. Wherever it has happened, the shrewdest temptation of the devil that lurks in the depths of noble human hearts has prevailed. Think of those little sterilized coteries of good people pledged to a good cause in which the spirit of unintelligence, of blind prejudice, of self-satisfied omniscience and omnisanctity has become a spirit of fatuous and futile faction, turning truth into a mockery and righteousness into a byword and a reproach. They have all sprung out of this blind subservience of the men whose temptation it is to be moral slaves to the men whose temptation it is to be moral tyrants. And it is not only the man of strong will and righteous purpose who is exposed to this temptation. It is the society also which has sprung into existence for the very purpose of witnessing to righteousness. It, too, can betray the cause of God by listening to this temptation of the evil one. Too often the Church of Christ has yielded to this temptation. It has aimed at a barren and deceptive unity by imposing

a faith in words to which nothing corresponded in fact, by attaching such an importance to that faith that the world has become persuaded, rightly or wrongly, that it valued it far above a holy life, that the dishonest have been ready to claim their share in the Church's hopes on the ground of that nominal faith, that the honest have rejected all part and lot in her life because on such terms they could not claim it, and, more, have not thought it worth claiming. By false fears, by baseless hopes, by hopes and fears, I mean, which have nothing to do with life, she has too often sought to impose upon the world the unity of an unreal faith. She, too, has sought to hypnotise men into formal submission when her duty was by all means to educate them into vital practical realisation of the truth of God. She has been led captive by that strong delusion to which we are all prone, to believe a lie and to organize a lie. I speak, of course, of her working system and its effects, not of the theory which lies behind it and of which it is but a perversion. In theory her object is by all means to lead men to holiness, to train them in the love and practise of goodness. She has, indeed, never abandoned that purpose, but she has thought to compass it too easily. Having found in her age-long experience certain means most helpful to her end, she has insisted so vehemently upon those means that in the popular imagination, and often it would seem in the mind of her own teachers, they have taken the place of the end itself. Holy living has lost its individual

quality and has become the almost mechanical result of a stereotyped process. Her devout children have got to think of the most formal use of the organised means of holiness as a sufficient guarantee of their reconciliation with God. Meanwhile she herself has forgotten the necessity that was laid upon her of following after the ever-advancing truth of God, of listening for the fresh oracles He speaks to every generation and interpreting them to her children, of training them to remember that He speaks also to each of them individually, and that in hearing that voice and obeying it lies the secret of individual salvation. Her temptation has been the temptation of all great societies, to substitute the organisation of the means of life for real living, to be satisfied with imposing a common method which often paralysed life where it was necessary by all methods to evoke life.

Our Lord's life was the supreme rejection of such a temptation. It was not only in the words "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve," that He put it from Him. It was in His patient action upon men. It was in the special mission He accepted as His own and in the method He chose to give effect to it. How easily He could have extended His influence over His own people and over the multitudes beyond who were thirsting for some new word of God. One can imagine the easy accommodations which would have been necessary, the trifling compromises which would have made it possible

for Him to rule the hearts of men. But He chose instead a little band of disciples, and them He sought only to arouse, to awaken, to deliver into the freedom and responsibility of individual sonship to God. He would impose upon them no will of His own, because the imposition of even His will would only have deadened where He wanted to make alive. And so He served God. The spontaneity and variety of the early Church, the warm, rich life of holiness of that fresh dawn of God, came from the self-denial of Jesus on the Mount of Temptation. Something of His secret had passed into the souls of His disciples, whose various types He had so sedulously respected and fostered. We are sometimes deceived, I think, by the importance which the fragmentariness of the Christian records has ascribed to St. Paul. It was not one commanding will which forged and compacted the force of the early Church. I think, on the whole, those historians are nearer the mark who contend that St. Paul, like our Lord, was a solitary witness, that His message was not in His own day thoroughly understood, that it was rather an influence which grew in the course of ages to its complete significance. At any rate, the early life of the Church reflects the infinite variety of individual devotion to the will of God. That was the direct result of the method which Jesus deliberately chose for Himself in the solitary struggle of the desert, of the secret of the true service of God which He then mastered and left to the world of His brethren as the master-secret of His own life.

IV.

"Then the devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee, and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." That story is surely the ultimate triumph of symbolism. It seems impossible to imagine a more daring and yet a more adequate translation of certain secrets of the spirit of man than this image gives us. True, we can only attempt to read these secrets as they present themselves in our own experience, but even there we can test the adequacy of the symbol to convey the truth of the experience.

There are moments of exaltation when we seem to escape from our ordinary selves. The bonds which attach us to the familiar interests of earth are for a moment loosed. We soar above the pestering pinfold in which we are ordinarily confined. The everyday feelings and hopes and cares grow remote and almost fantastic. We wonder how they can have absorbed us so completely. We almost forget that they have. We tread the streets of some holy city of the soul's imagining, and for the moment it is our home. We have ascended into it, aloft upon its solitary hilltop, from the low levels of the plain. Without an effort

we seem to reach the highest pinnacle of its holiest place, and we survey from thence the dwarfed, distorted phantasy of the world we have left behind. Such moments may be rare, but they come to us none the less. And they come especially in the first enthusiasm of youth, in the freshness of life's dawn. They signalise often the first realisation of the vastness of life's import and possibilities. Perhaps for most of us the mystery of religion first became personal in this mood of sudden mystic exaltation. The experience may have assumed many different forms, it may have arisen out of very different occasions, but in essence it was the same. The feeling of a transformed self, the hope of a perfect social order, the vision of a satisfying beauty in the soul of the artist, the sudden flash of an ideal truth across the landscape which the young and confident intellect has just begun to survey—these are some of the forms in which this exaltation possesses us. But however it comes, the effect is always the same. The world we know becomes unreal. We no longer see it at level gaze in its humdrum order, the things that are near standing out in their imposing importance, the things that are distant receding into a proportionate insignificance. We see it from above, all diminished to an equal pettiness, all its parts shrunk together into a common unreality. For the moment it is not our world at all. We breathe a clearer, a more intoxicating air. And then it is that temptation comes. The dizziness of the moral height assails

us. We are ready to trust ourselves to the void. The ardent mind despises all the slow intellectual gains of the past. It is ready to commit itself wholly and immediately to the intuition which possesses it. It rejects the patient, hesitant judgment of maturer minds as contemptible cowardice or patent disloyalty to the plainest truth. Or the youthful reformer is ready to fling himself headlong into the arms of that radiant future, the outlines of whose form he has seen in vision. He cannot easily persuade himself that the form is as yet unsubstantial, that it is only the outlines that as yet float in some region of unresisting air, that it is upon the level earth below and out of the substance of earth that those outlines must be filled in, that it is necessary for him to return soberly and with deliberate, careful step to the earth he has left, to take with him the vision gained in that region of purer air and to work it out in the sweat of his soul. Or, again, the man on whom an inner change has suddenly passed, who feels for the first time the great transforming breath stir his soul into a richer and fuller life, is tempted to trust absolutely the mere feeling which he has known. It seems to him almost a denial of God to set his hand again to the slow, laborious processes of life. He would fling himself into the sustaining arms of God as the supreme act of the new faith which has quickened his soul. His moral life reels under the intoxication of a quietist assurance. Does not his heart ring with the promise that God's world is full of ministering

spirits which will bear him up lest at any time he should dash his foot against any stone of offence?

Such is the temptation of the uplifted soul. There is only one way in which it can meet it. It must recognize its impulse for what it is—its own temptation of God. God is not honoured but denied, He is not trusted but tempted, by such impulses. We dishonour God when we think of His help as some magical gift, when we expect it in some unsubstantial region of mere emotional experience. His real help lies in that original instinct by which we are able to feel towards Him, to need Him, to learn increasingly the claims of His service, to find the true satisfaction of life in devoting it to the purposes which we can feel to be His. It lies in that burden of judgment with which each of us comes into the world in greater or less degree, that original necessity of challenging every experience and every opportunity, of forcing it to declare what is helpful in it and what is hurtful, of learning the measure of its kinship with our soul's needs and the measure of its hostility to them. There the help of God most surely lies, for there we bear the original stamp of His nature, the secret of our ultimate origin in Him. But it comes, too, with every use of that power. Wherever we stand up to the world, challenge it, refuse to take it as it comes in its crude, unsifted state, but insist on extracting from it whatever makes for goodness and turning that to account, there, and there alone, we are being strengthened by the spirit of God. There is perhaps no more inveterate

instance of our temptation to tempt God than our blind and thoughtless trust in every form of religious exaltation, our habit of thinking of religious acts as if they were only expressions of religious feeling, or worse still, only the listless expectation of something that God will do for us. Think, for instance, of how we often regard prayer and the Sacraments. They are far too often for us merely magical moments at which we await a miraculous advent of God's grace. But they are nothing at all if they are not the very highest forms of the soul's action, if they are not vitally connected in our use of them with every aim and purpose of our daily life. They are simply the concentration in an ideal moment of feeling and purpose of all our ordinary interests, aims, endeavours, hopes, fears, of all we labour to reach and all we seek to shun. And it is because they are this that we can be sure of God's response through them, of God's presence in them. God is present only to the active life of the soul, to the life that is striving to accomplish its eternal destiny through the common duties that are prescribed to us all, to the life that is expressing itself in an active, practical judgment of its own world. There is growing up to-day a tendency to think of religion as mere exaltation of feeling, to divorce it from the moral effort in connection with which alone it has any reality. It is a tendency largely, I think, due to, certainly fostered by, certain outside investigators into the nature of religion. Such a book, for instance, as Professor William James's

"Varieties of Religious Experience," in spite of its undoubted psychological insight, seems to me to be religiously harmful. The value it seems to attach to certain semi-hysterical expressions of religious feeling is, of course, perfectly legitimate from the psychological standpoint, but from the religious standpoint it is false and misleading. And unfortunately this attitude of the professional investigator chimes in only too readily with a mood of current theology which would distinguish between the spheres of religion and morality. Such a mood needs the sternest resistance. We need to insist that, whatever distinction may be made for purposes of mere intellectual analysis between the spheres of religion and morality, in practical reality they are one. Every religious act is but the highest and most concentrated expression of our ordinary moral acts and aims, has no meaning or force apart from them, and above all cannot secure apart from them that co-operation of the Divine Spirit in which the religious act has its justification and its value. Prayer, for instance, is the special consecration of all that we would each of us do and are actually doing, of all that we would be and actually are. It is our outer work and our inner struggle after perfection consciously lifted into a moment of communion with God. It is the laying upon God's altar at stated moments of all that in ordinary moments we do and are in order that His sacred fire may descend upon them and refine them to a purer energy and substance. It is no mere faithless cry for the

intervention of God. It is the act of practical faith in the world of our experience as not needing God's occasional intervention only because it gets all the meaning and purpose it has from the perpetual presence in it of His patient, tireless energy. It is our attempt to lift our imperfect, variable energy into communion with His perfect constant energy that something of its constancy and perfection may pass into ours. It is not God that is wanting to His world, as if our urgency and our reminders were needed to provoke Him to occasional response. What is wanting is our response to the ceaseless, unvarying urgency of His spirit of righteousness. We dishonour and belittle the nature of God when we think of even the greatest victories of righteousness as special miracles of His power. They are the miracles of our too infrequent response to His power, the moments when we turn to account the constant miracle of His power which we so often allow to lie fallow within us. The real miracle of God is the universal presence of that power in man by which he gropes towards the right and recognises in it his one satisfying need, the peace and inner harmony which follow upon the diligent use of that power, the discord and sense of failure which follow upon its neglect. This is the constant miracle which makes all other miracles possible, which stings and urges man into the gradual disengagement of a Divine order out of the material order in the midst of which he lives.

To look for any other miracle, to trust to any

other miracle, is to tempt God. That is not to say that we know every secret of God's order. Alas! we know the mere alphabet of the great lesson that has yet to be learned. But we must learn, not trust ourselves impulsively to the hasard of some sudden splendid guess. On the pinnacle of exalted feeling of some intoxicating moment that temptation comes to us. We think we can deny all the prosaic experience of the past, that to deny it is to honour God, to trust His promise of the sustaining angelic hands. But we deceive ourselves fatally. The help of God is not haphasard and unconditional. It is conditioned by the slow and patient travail of the soul, by the mind that will put to the proof its knowledge, by the heart that will put to the proof its feeling, by the will that will put to the proof its purpose. So only can we be sure that we are not tempting the Lord our God.

V.

We have been meditating hitherto on the temptations which arise in a great soul when it first realises the greatness of its call, and on the nature of its victory over those temptations. Let us now turn to a consideration of the kind of life which issues from such a victory. Let us look at the life as it sets itself to the fulfilment of its mission.

There are two aspects of every life on the due

balance of which its quality depends—its output and its intake. No life can give effectively save in the measure that it receives. The secret of every successful effort is inspiration. The tragedy of routine activity is that it is the expression of an effort which hardly deserves to be reckoned as human at all. It is what we often call it, not altogether realising the condemnation which lurks in our description, mechanical. Now routine activity may come of mere moral laziness, a laziness which may be associated on the one hand with external necessity, or on the other with the momentum of internal habit. We may repeat ourselves because there is a necessity which forces us to action and self-repetition is the easiest form of action, or we may do so because it is almost easier to go on doing so than to stop short altogether. We have got into the habit of doing something, and to repeat the action is more satisfying than to arrest all action whatsoever. This is the secret of much of that useless and unfruitful action which cumbers the earth and adds nothing to the history of humanity. But there is certainly another source of our readiness to sink into mere routine activity. It is that we have satisfied ourselves with a completed view of the demands that are made—or ever can be made—upon our specific power and opportunity of action. We think we know exactly what we ought to do. Our life-scheme is clear and definite. It needs no expansion, no enlargement, no deepening of its content. And so we go on repeating ourselves

indefinitely. We do the same things, think the same things, say the same things our whole life through. We pride ourselves on what we call our consistency, but what is too often only our stupidity and lack of imagination, on what if we would but go a little deeper we should too often find was only our pride. And the tragedy of it is that, the more important the aspect of life with which we are dealing, the more likely we are to involve ourselves in this sluggish routine which comes of an initial pride and unimaginative fixity of spirit. In the active affairs of life, in the business of commerce and industry, success depends, as the author of *Friends in Council* pointed out more than a generation ago, on the presence of imagination. In such affairs a man is not likely to succeed unless he keeps in vital touch with the needs and movements of a changing world. But when we come to those affairs which need so much more the exercise of imagination, to the affairs of statesmanship which deal with the lives of men in their totality, how much rarer is the gift which would redeem the work, how much greater is the temptation to trust to the application of safe maxims and stereotyped formulas. And even in the history of thought, where there is no life without imagination, what arid tracts there are of mere futile repetition. But it is when we come to the highest concern of all, to religion which concerns the whole man and the whole race of men, that repetition is enthroned on the seat of all the virtues. There it is taken for granted that God

has delivered Himself once and for all, that man knows all God has to tell him, that he has only to repeat that knowledge in action of a uniform character throughout the ages. There it is blasphemously forgotten that God is an Eternal Spirit eternally leading us into all truth, and leading us into it by way of action continually dependent upon and supported by His inspiration. Religion too often, of course unconsciously, prides itself upon the commission of that sin which our Lord once denounced in terrible language as unpardonable, the sin against the Holy Spirit, the refusal to trust itself to that without which it cannot endure or even exist, His inspiration.

So, then, all human activity is determined by the quality and the permanence of its inspiration. It cannot give out what it has not taken in. It must receive continually in order that it may give effectually. That was the secret of our Lord's life, the secret which He had learned in the first stress of His temptation, the secret which He learned with more and more completeness all His life through. In that struggle in the desert He had put aside once and for all as a tempting of God the desire, which after all can only arise in the great soul, to put God to the full proof of His power. He put aside the temptation of a moment of natural hesitancy as to the reality of that great assurance which had come to Him in the waters of Jordan, the temptation to put that reality to the proof in one daring act of power. "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made

bread." He resisted as a temptation of the Evil One the impulse which possessed Him for a moment on the dizzy intoxicating pinnacle of His assurance of Divine Sonship, to commit Himself passively to the limitless power of support of the Divine Providence. And again he realised that the promise which unbridled imagination for a moment held out to Him of bringing in the Kingdom by spiritual force or spiritual compromise was a temptation to render homage to the power of evil. In those moments of temptation He had learned the true way of life, the true way of loyalty to God. He came down from the heights of spiritual exaltation which had been also the heights of spiritual temptation braced and strengthened for the work of the common levels of earth. And He had His reward in a new greatness of power which brought a strange healing into the lives of men. Yet from the exhaustion of that use of healing power, He withdrew continually to the desert place, to the solitary region of prayer, to the soul's loneliness in which it renewed its sense of oneness with God.

That is the secret of life, of its balance, its sanity, its effectual vigour, its escape from sterilising routine, its assurance of worthy growth. Prayer is the salt of work. Work is the indispensable condition which gives sincerity, meaning, value to prayer. Only by this its alternate outgoing and intake does the soul exist as an instrument of God. Think of what the work of a son of God, of any true child of God, is. It has no

predetermined limits. It knows not the extent of its own power and efficacy. We are wrong when we think that it is a mark of true greatness to compass with the mind, or even with the deliberate purpose of the will, the results of its action. Real human greatness always does something more and greater than it knows. It is only littleness of soul that fixes the measure of its action, that cannot indeed overpass if it even reaches the limits which it has deliberately set itself. But the great soul always overpasses the limit of its own previsions. It may indeed in one sense be true that, as Browning says :

> "This high man, aiming at a million,
> Misses an unit."

But there is another and a still more real sense in which, aiming at the paltry unit of his immediate reckoning, he reaches the million whose count altogether escapes his conscious calculation. And this is natural and inevitable because he is rooted in God. He is obeying an impulse which is greater far than any human consciousness of it. All true work is of this kind. It does not measure itself by its conformity to some abstract external code of law. To do that, as the religious genius of St. Paul so clearly saw, is only to sterilise the soul's energy. The law is ineffectual for the giving of life. Its only office is to reveal our own impotence and to condemn it. But let us only feel that the energy that is pulsing in us is the energy of God, and it becomes purified, braced, consciously responsive to a Divine inspiration, unconsciously

effectual of Divine purposes far beyond its immediate ken. And no such energy can sustain itself at its height unless it reverts continually to its source, holds conscious communion with the Life from which it issues. Therein lies the value and the constant need of prayer. Prayer need not be uttered in words. The soul in its moments of sincerity knows whether words help it or no, whether it can utter itself at all in human speech. But at least prayer is a conscious act of the soul, the most conscious and the most sincere of all its acts, the communion with its own deepest hopes and aims steadied by the energy and experience of its working hours, the communion through which alone it can believe in itself and be very sure of God. And it is in turn from those moments of communion that it issues to an intelligence of the world, to the sympathy that heals and redeems far beyond the measure of its knowledge.

VI.

We have seen the kind of temptations to which the great soul may be exposed, to which, indeed, by reason of its greatness it is almost of necessity exposed. We have seen the kind of life which issues out of victory over those temptations. But let us not think that the victory can ever become definite and assured, that life while it remains life can ever be throned above the thunder.

It moves in a region which may know its long moments of peace, but is preparing even then the purifying rage of the tempest. It is just when a soul has been most true to God that the supreme bitterness of doubt may assail it. For that truth, that practical loyalty, will assuredly lead it into the heart of a conflict whose issue it cannot foresee, a conflict of world-forces which only the Spirit that works eternally in the midst of those forces can resolve. The temptation which lies at the beginning of a noble life, the temptation to spiritual short-cuts, is one which the mere act of living tends to overcome. But the temptation which awaits such a life at its close is more subtle and more formidable. It is the temptation to despair of its own effort, to rebel against its apparent futility, to arraign the will obedience to which has led to the collapse of all the high hopes it itself had once inspired. It was into the very heart of such a temptation that our Lord entered in Gethsemane. It was the bitterness of His experience of it that wrung from his lips those words of counsel to His disciples, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into such a temptation."

Think of what it is that even the most faithful of lives can accomplish. Our Lord came proclaiming a new word of hope for humanity. The Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, the Kingdom of a renovated and recovered human order. Into that Kingdom the crippled and broken souls should enter freely, nay, they should enter first of all. There those that were last in the old false disorder should be

first, and its first should be last. There the sun would shine upon the evil and upon the good alike, that at last the evil might have hope to become good. It was a challenge, as every original soul coming with its message out of the eternal heart of life is a challenge, to the existing order. It was a witness to the one unchanging truth that constitutes all the changing forms of truth, the truth that man must grow towards God, that he cannot rest in God save as he grows into Him. But every spiritual order tends towards the belief that it need not move, that it has already attained, that every menace to its fixity is a blasphemous arraignment of God Himself. Even when it moves in spite of itself, it still cherishes the belief in its own immobility, it still seeks to impose that belief upon others. And the encounter between it and the new messenger of God is inevitable. He may do his best to win its confidence: he may be sure that he has come not to destroy its law but to fulfil it. But his appearance has only intensified that inveterate prejudice of its necessity to God, of its infallible possession of the Divine oracles. The world must fall to pieces if its infallibility is even questioned. So it was that Pharisaism found its unescapeable challenge in Jesus and realized that either He or it must be destroyed. And the issue had been forced to its ultimate logic. Here in Jerusalem, in the sacred centre of the established order, the daring innovator had not feared to try conclusions. He had openly hurled denunciations against the accredited guardians of all that was

most orthodox in Israel; He had invaded the sacred seat of the national religion as its jealous Master, as the purifying scourge of its customary and accepted abuses; He had even stirred the thoughtless and inconstant crowds to a momentary enthusiasm for the new hope as unintelligent as it proved to be unstable. But He had also roused into a destructive energy all that venomous and dogged hatred of the unknown which ever lurks in the heart of established power. And now it was about to crush Him. For Himself He had no fear. The cup of bitterness which He would, if it had been possible, have put from Him was not the prospect of the physical suffering of death. His soul had in that hour reached a mood of feeling too intense to be aware of its own personal claims, whether of body or of spirit. But there was something else which pressed upon Him with a sense of dread. What had been the effect of this mission to which He had devoted His life? Was it well, after all, that He had denounced all that most visibly and in its own way effectually stood for religion among His own people, that He had publicly poured contempt upon the straitest sectaries of His own faith, that He had gathered about Him the unthinking multitudes only too ready to applaud the critic of an order in which they had no hope and no part save that of enforced submission? True, He had done all this that He might rouse the slumbering religious consciousness of His people to a vigorous and healthy activity. But had He succeeded? Had He released any

positive force to replace the religious negativism against which He had witnessed? Had He not rather hardened still more that rigid tradition which He had laboured to relax and vivify, and perhaps at the same time unloosed forces of revolt and disintegration whose outcome He could not foresee? This, at any rate, is the trial through which every soul that brings a new force into the world must pass. Whether he wills it or not, his loyalty to truth is a challenge to that which is ceasing to be truth because it would claim to be the truth that needs no revision. Whether he wills it or not, his message which is rooted in a positive faith dissolves the old order established in a traditional custom which has become the denial of faith. Whether he wills it or not, he releases forces which are incalculable, forces which will almost certainly destroy something that is good before they can build up something that is better. And sooner or later every such soul comes to realise this terrible significance of his own witness to truth, this invariable method by which life passes to fuller life, this ministry of death and disintegration to every resurrection of human history, this vast seeming hasard which God imposes upon all His faithful servants. And the hour of that realisation, when it comes, is the hour of most grievous temptation. The human will that longs to see the definite issue, that longs to accommodate itself to the means that promise a definite issue, clamours to have its say. And it has much to say for itself. It sees so clearly the easy compromise

that would still give it room to work effectively. It knows the readiness of authority to yield when some even merely formal concession is made to it. It thinks, not unnaturally, that such a concession is justified by the salutary effects it may achieve in tempering the character and modifying the attitude of authority itself, and by the still more salutary avoidance which it promises of all the perilous risks of revolutionary change. And yet the will that would so bend before the storm, and not ignobly, may feel that it is in conflict with a higher will which claims it utterly, which demands of it the entire sacrifice of its own short-sighted previsions, which calls upon it to trust itself absolutely to its higher directions. That is where the stress of temptation comes. Between an obvious good and an obvious evil the will can choose. Or even if it seems to have lost the power of choice, even if the attraction of the evil be overpowering, the will is still not deceived; it recognises the character of that attraction to which it is yielding. But between what we instinctively feel to be a higher good, though we feel also that the goodness of its effect is hidden from us, and what we know to be a lower good, whose beneficent effects notwithstanding we can unmistakably foresee and measure, the choice is always difficult.

Let us look more closely at this aspect of temptation in which lies its greatest strength. What do we mean by definite good and definite evil, that clear line of moral division to which the least developed will is not obtuse? We mean a

moral distinction which has already got itself registered in the general heart of man, to which universal human experience or at least the general experience of which we have become the spiritual heirs immediately witnesses. Face to face with such a distinction the dullest will cannot deceive itself or, if it does, deceives itself consciously. It is impelled to a righteous decision by the pressure of a constant and general witness. Or if in its feebleness it fails to decide and yields before the masterful power of the temptation to evil, it finds its immediate rebuke and judgment in that settled certainty of moral opinion. But the higher good is just that which has not yet attained general consent or even recognition, which is still travailing in birth in the solitary conscience or in the few elect consciences of a particular moment. It is in the souls that have first caught the vision of such a good that the fierceness of temptation rages. The profound and elemental sympathy which is the distinguishing quality of such souls only intensifies its fierceness. "Can we," they think, "be right after all and the whole world wrong? Is it after all the voice of God that is declaring itself in us in this new claim which increasingly separates us from our fellows, which shuts us out from their understanding and seems to nullify all possibility of our influence for good over them? May we not be following a moral will-o'-the-wisp, a false and deceptive flare of new hopes and views of right, the self-kindled gases released from the poisonous ferment of our

spiritual pride?" And assuredly that pause of judgment is not necessarily mere weakness. It is the purging fire through which the solitary soul must pass to its victory. In that high mood of trial, conscience must purify itself of what remains in it of baseness, of mere defiant obstinacy, of the natural resentment engendered by unintelligent opposition, of self-sufficiency and pride. But it must too make its account with God, with the voice of truth that has chosen it to speak through. It must realise that its loyalty to its fellows lies in its loyalty to God, that in the last resort humanity is not a bundle of souls supporting one another by leaning against one another in the deceptive strength of received opinions, that the unity of mankind, the real communion of man, is being ever constituted afresh in the new vision of right which works itself out in the voluntary suffering for its sake of some solitary martyr of God. To be true to that voice at all risks and all costs is the service which God demands of His elect. It was that ultimate service to which Jesus braced Himself in the final temptation of Gethsemane. The hope of immediate and visible results of His mission had foundered in the gulf of contemporary misunderstanding and hatred. Yet He went down to His death, confident that He was founding a new hope for the world, that in Him men would recognise their true selves and through Him grow increasingly into that true communion for which in the eternal counsels of God they had been destined.

Thoughts on the Passion

"L'homme s'attribue faussement ce qui est à Dieu; et Dieu, pour lui apprendre à s'humilier, prend véritablement ce qui est à l'homme."—Bossuet—*Sermon sur l'honneur du monde*.

Thoughts on the Passion

Monday in Holy Week.

"To what purpose is this waste?"—*St. Matthew xxvi.* 8.

The story of our Lord's passion is the story of the suffering which all eminent human goodness has to endure. Goodness suffers because it is goodness, because its invariable effect is to arouse into vigorous life all the dormant forces of evil and to elicit their hostility. So all the blotchy humours of the soil burst forth into poisonous vegetation under the generous warmth of the spring sunshine. A good life, a generous soul, is the challenge which rouses into conscious defiance or unconscious sullen opposition everything that is ungenerous and selfish and evil. It is perhaps the only way in which goodness can work its redemptive mission. The evil must be brought to the surface in order that its full evil may be recognised, in order that it may even recognise itself to be evil. And no one recognises this stern and terrible necessity of the way of redemption so thoroughly as the good man. It is what gives him hope and courage in the midst of the most grievous assaults of evil. Yet none the less he suffers from them. To recognise the necessity of such suffering, to accept it with a high heart and a constant will, is not to feel the less its bitterness.

And it is not open enmity that is the hardest part of the suffering which goodness has to endure.

It is the secret imperfection which at critical moments it discovers in those who are its friends. Our Lord did not perhaps at the critical moment of His career suffer so much from those who had always resisted Him as from those who had from the beginning yielded to the attraction of His goodness, not so much from the Scribes and Pharisees as from His own disciples. There is nothing which may deceive us so much as the fact that we have been able to recognise the good man, to follow his lead, to make, as we think, his cause our own. Our very affection for him may become the instrument of our betrayal of all that he is really aiming at. For there is always in such affection something instinctively selfish and unreasonable which must be purged away before it can become worthy. There is in it a sullen jealousy which seeks to keep its object entirely to itself, which leads it to think that it alone possesses the secret of him whom it honours. There is in it a suspicion tending to hatred of every other kind and degree of affection offered at the same shrine.

And the worst of this temper of jealous possession is that in time it blinds us to the real secrets of the person or the cause we think we are honouring. The affection which ought to have opened both the eyes and the heart has by its perversion effectually closed them both. Is there not something terribly depressing about the attitude of the disciples as the narrative of the Passion reveals it to us? From first to last there is an unintelligence, a blindness to the real nature

and the real issues of the tragedy which is being enacted before their eyes, which we could not believe did it not come to us on their own authority. Indeed, we are at times inclined to see in it the exaggeration of the after-mood of penitence. But as we read it again and again we find no support for such an explanation. A confession no doubt it is, but it is the confession of hearts that are again in full control of themselves, that can look back upon their past defection and tell its story in cold blood. The naked truth has become the necessity of consciences that can at least be just to themselves. And in the light of that truth they see now all the tragedy of their then unsuspected treachery. They see its baseness, and they see how such baseness came to be possible for them. And looking back to the very beginning of the tragedy of those last days they remember first of all the symbolical act by which it was heralded. They remember the affectionate impulse of the nameless woman whom the author of the Fourth Gospel later identified with Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. They remember the outburst of jealousy which led to their cowardly sneer at it, and the base subterfuge by which they had justified their repulse of the loving offering of a poor woman's heart to the Master on the eve of His agony. Now they could share all the guilt of that blindness between them. It was their common act of treachery, the beginning of their common defection from the great trust of love and understanding which He had committed to

them. It is one of the many indications that the Fourth Gospel is founded on a later and less trustworthy tradition that its author attributes this repulse entirely to Judas and even assigns as his motive nothing more than an instinct of coarse and dishonest greed of money. The poor traitor had become in the waning memory of what had actually happened the convenient scapegoat of the common sin. But the tradition emanating from the apostles themselves had invented no such easy way of escape. They had all alike rejected the tribute of a simpler affection, a less sophisticated devotion, than their own. And they have left the story of their barren hearts plain enough for all the world to read. How easy it is to get behind that sorriest of excuses, "This ointment might have been sold for much and given to the poor." It is honest enough in its way, as honest as any of the superficial excuses by which we justify our wrong-doing. It is by superficial honesty of this kind that we successfully hide from ourselves or sometimes even fail to suspect our fundamental dishonesty. We buttress ourselves in the application of some abstract principle against the crying needs of actual life. We make our formula the means of escape from the necessity of measuring what each particular circumstance requires, of dealing with it justly and face to face. Nay, we huddle away under its ample cloak, out of even our own sight, all the pettiness, the mean jealousy, the unworthy and unavowable feelings which are the real motives of what we do. The

disciples had learned their barren formula. The Kingdom of Heaven was to be the Kingdom of the poor. It was a Kingdom into which the rich could not enter, save on the hard condition of selling all that they had and giving it to the poor. Had not that been the burden of the Master's message? Was its constitution known to any as it was to them, its future vicegerents, to whom it had been promised that they should sit on twelve thrones judging in its new and righteous order the twelve tribes of Israel? Already the coming of the Kingdom was in view. The burden of their future dignity already weighed upon their shoulders. Already it was their business to proclaim its laws, to utter in high-sounding phrases its abstract principles. Wrapped up in the self-conceit and self-importance of coming power, they found in even the rare offering of humble and grateful love an occasion for their abstract moralising. But in fact they deceived themselves. Behind their formula lay something more human and not quite so harmless. There lay the jealousy of the intruder in their own exclusive shrine, the contemptuous irritation with a spontaneous outburst of grateful love which seemed to trench upon their own peculiar privileges, to put their own more regulated affection in the wrong. But it was the rich heart of the nameless woman, not the poor pedantry of the disciples, that had discovered the real secret of that dread hour. One can feel the stillness that fell upon those inflated souls, the rebuke that struck down their

pride, the remorse that bit into their tortured hearts, as the gentle words of their Lord disclosed to them for the first time the full measure of the near reality. "In that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial."

The heart needs instruction. It needs discipline. It may easily, it is true, lose itself in a false and wayward sentimentalism. But at least its instincts are true. What it needs is the response that can brace it to all the energy of which it is capable. It needs the understanding heart of Jesus to accept its tribute, and by accepting it to hold it up to the high measure of its duty. The one thing that cannot pass judgment upon it is the paltry pedantry of the abstract understanding. It is just the understanding that must take its inspiration from the heart, and learn to guide its generous force into righteous strength. That is the reason that our Lord did not lay down the rigid formulas of truth or of order, that He left us free to forge them, as our highest and most imperative duty, out of the growing experience of our life in Him, that He sought the hearts of men and their minds through their hearts. Our religion is still the love of Him, such love as will hear His call in the needs of the least of His brethren, as will recognise where He is suffering in this world, and what it is that is causing his suffering there, as will pour out the rich ointment of comfort and hope on human souls against their day of dread and agony and in that day. That is our worthy and acceptable service of God, a service which will insensibly rid our

hearts of all their pride and all the jealous exclusiveness of their demands, which will bring us humbled and broken to the feet of Jesus and keep us there in the indefeasible strength of a true humility.

Tuesday in Holy Week.

"And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, one of you which eateth with Me shall betray Me. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto Him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I?"—*St. Mark xiv.* 18, 19.

We saw yesterday how the disciples of Jesus, including the Twelve, had to endure the rebuke of their arrogant self-sufficiency. They had to learn that their special position of privilege had only left them more crassly stupid, that for all their nearness to the Divine Teacher they had failed of that insight of the heart by which we touch the real secrets of human souls and their actual joys and sorrows. It is not an easy lesson for any of us to have to learn. It is not easy to admit that where we thought we were strongest we are really weakest, that our peculiar knowledge has proved itself in grave issues to be a mere wooden pedantry, less discerning than the common ignorance, that our conventional correctness of opinion and conduct have hidden even from ourselves the blindness of our heart and the stupidity of our conscience. But some day or other the irresistible demonstration has come. At whatever cost we *have* learned the lesson. For the moment

at least the veil of self-delusion has fallen away. It is a bitter experience for those who have to face it. There are few things which ought to move our sympathy and pity more than the being near those who have to endure it. For such an experience, necessary as it is for the growth of a soul, has its dangers. A soul lives by its self-respect, even if the self does not deserve its own respect. When that crumbles away it is left naked and defenceless to all the assaults of circumstance. The mere illusion of strength will often uphold a man in the sunny, fair-weather days of the spirit. There is a certain legitimate pride which is the moral backbone that keeps most of us upright in the midst of ordinary temptations. The saint, in the enthusiasm of his genuine but exceptional humility, is sometimes apt to forget its value and to depreciate it unduly. And when it does fail us under the stress of an unusual trial, we have often nothing on which to fall back. The moral nature endures a kind of dissolution, collapses in a fainting of the heart and a syncope of the will. Something like this was perhaps the experience of the disciples, when the words of the Master had disclosed to them their own blindness. For the moment they could not believe in themselves at all. The dazzling vision of their own importance had not merely faded into the light of common day, but had sunk in the bewildering and trackless darkness of the soul's night. They who had ridden the seas so proudly in the days of halcyon calm now lay weltering in the trough of despair. They could

believe anything of themselves. There was no accusation to which they were not ready to plead guilty. Even that terrible possibility of treachery the basest and most cowardly they could not instinctively repel. Nay, it haunted them as a dreadful reality which might already have accomplished itself, unknown to themselves, in their craven souls. Do we not know something of that mood of profound self-distrust when we are ready to imagine ourselves capable of any guilt, when our imagination becomes morbid and imputes to us sins of which we have never been guilty? It comes to us usually as a result of some penitence that has humbled us to the dust. We have been walking haughtily in the pride of our strength. Our moral life has been equable and serene. We have known how to value all that has made our lives fair and honourable in the sight of others. It has no doubt been largely the expression of a habit easily acquired through its conformity with our natural inclinations and fostered by favourable and accordant circumstances. Yet we have naturally made the most of it. We have taken for strength of character what was nothing more than a happy accident of the conditions affecting character. We have taken for an inward steadiness and constancy which might be trusted what was only an habitual pliancy to favouring circumstance. And we have overlooked or explained away all the ominous signs of weakness which would appear now and then, all that pointed to a character escaping from its own control or that perhaps

might have warned us if we had listened to the warning that it was not in control of itself at all. We have even used these warnings to flatter our moral vanity. We have whispered to ourselves that these were but the defects which witnessed to the excellence of our qualities. Was it not true, the voice of the charmer insinuated, that all strong characters atoned for their qualities by some defects? And then the great disillusion came. The wind of circumstance veered, and as we could not trim our sails to meet it, we foundered in the gulf of unsuspected temptation. At once the pride of self-confidence vanished, and with it went also its stability. *There* is the danger of the sudden overthrow of belief in ourselves, of the sudden discovery that we have no right to such belief. It leaves the soul a tenantless room where every voice sounds spectral and hollow and terrifies with grotesque accusation. It leaves our nature vacant for the easy occupation of the seven devils whom the dispossessed devil of unwarranted self-confidence may persuade to join him in a fresh assault. It was to such a mood of soul-dissolution that the disciples had fallen a prey on that night of their Master's agony. It is no wonder if they were unable to hold up their hearts to the claims of that ordeal, if one betrayed Him and one denied Him, if they all forsook Him and fled.

Was it not part of our Lord's suffering that He stood helpless in the midst of this defection, nay, that He knew that it was exactly His own Divine steadfastness that had been the occasion of this

human defection? That is part of the suffering of all supreme goodness. By its ineffable loyalties to the higher right it rebukes into mere helplessness and self-distrust the routine goodness of lesser souls. It is not so much that the ordinary man, satisfied that he is true to the will of God because he has been happily preserved from the assault of grievous temptation, does not understand the higher purpose to which the greater soul must bend its energy under the stress of a Divine impulse. That, indeed, is also true. We often miss the greatness of the great through mere unintelligence. To us their aim seems often merely chimerical, a fantastic quixotism of goodness. But often, too, we do see it in its true proportions, and at the sight our heart faints within us. It rebukes us into a mood of desperate disarray of the soul, into a mood when all things are possible with us, as much the ventures of unwise daring as the refusals of unwise cowardice. And meanwhile the agony of the hero of goodness is that he knows his heroism to be the storm-centre of all this moral confusion, that he has no magic to allay it, that it is the predestined means of clearing the air and restoring moral freshness and sweetness and order. Even God cannot force souls, or rather He will not force them because goodness is not a constraint imposed and endured but an influence desired and reproduced. And every soul must face the experience, however bitter or however gentle, by which God's goodness can be formed in it. It must tread the winepress alone. But of one thing it may be sure, that Jesus

is with it as He was with those poor confused souls in the upper room, suffering in its suffering, knowing as it does not know all the secret of its trouble, holding off His hand where even His touch could only grieve and irk, or laying it gently with the comfort of His perfect sympathy on some wounded spot that longs for healing. He is patient because He can look to the end, because His own soul has taught Him that beyond this wild confusion there is peace, that for Peter and the rest the night of self-accusing tears will end in the morn of recognition and of joy. Yet He suffers, and suffers the more that He can bring no present relief, that the soul of man which He had Himself bravely borne must dree its weird, must once and again sink out of its self-satisfied and self-deluding pride into the terror of dissolution if it is to rise again into the possession of its fuller self. He suffers as He holds up before the gaze of His disciples the spectacle of His own betrayal at their hands, as He listens to the confused terror of their self-accusation, as He forces upon them the full measure of their coming cowardice, as He rebukes with the terrible truth the desperate bravado of Peter, as His eyes of Divine compassion follow into the darkness of the night the darker frenzy of the soul of Judas. So He suffered, and so He suffers still wherever humanity faints or follows on the path of God.

Wednesday in Holy Week.

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not: and when thou art anointed, strengthen thy brethren." —*St. Luke xxii.* 31, 32.

We have seen something of the state of mind of the disciples at the critical moment of the lives of all of them. We have seen how their personal devotion to their Master was bound up with and overlaid by their own self-importance. We have seen in them the not uncommon ferment of vague personal ambitions in the supposed devotion to an abstract principle. We have seen them betrayed by that spirit of ambition into a surly narrowness and jealousy of heart. And then again we have heard the word of truth speak to them with a force which they could not resist, with a power of rebuke which reduced them to utter confusion of heart and will. We have seen them labouring in that momentary paralysis of the soul, a prey to the wildest suspicion of themselves, unable to assert what was good in themselves or to trust it with any certainty, ready to accuse themselves of any guilt which was suggested to their poor wandering consciences.

Yet it was in the midst of this earthquake of the soul that our Lord recalled to the disciples the greatness of their mission. He knew better than they the dread import of the crisis through which they were passing. He knew all the terror of weakness which had fallen upon their souls in the undeceiving of their pride of strength. In

one pregnant phrase he stated all the bitter secret of their trial. "Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat." That was the real meaning of their unstable mood, of the giddy whirl of heart and will which swept them now into impossible audacities of resolve, now into contemptible self-accusation. The crushed and broken elements of their life were passing through the sieve which some time or other tries the worth of all our souls. At such times there is only one thing that can knit us together again, that can re-form the soul out of its dissolution, that can restore our manhood to its ancient height. It is the sense of a duty entrusted to us, something that may be the focus of our scattered energies. Manhood recovers out of its shame in that sense of something which needs us. It is the most blessed gift of God to man, this proclamation that comes with every duty which rises upon our horizon that He needs us, that He cannot do without us. And that was how our Lord sought to recover the disciples from the depth of their shame. Once more He deliberately laid upon their shoulders that mission which they had so prostituted into an instrument of self-betrayal. Once more He set before them the principles of the Kingdom, its spirit of service, its temper of humility. Once more He reminded them that in it there was no room for personal ambition, that the very feature which had attracted them to it but a moment since was exactly the feature which was totally absent from its constitution.

They had feasted their hearts on that vision of the twelve thrones on which they were to sit. Once more He renewed that promise, but they that were to be worthy to sit upon them must be the servants of all. He who would be chief in that Kingdom must be indeed and not merely in name slave of the slaves of God.

The mission was to be the means of their salvation. They would have made it the means of their condemnation. It was to deliver them from the obsession of self. They would have used it only to glorify and inflate self. It was not in looking to the Kingdom that they were wrong. It was in looking to themselves in it. That had been the occasion of their downfall. It was in looking to it for its own sake, in order to accept all the opportunities of service which it might offer, in order to cultivate the spirit which would enable them to serve in it, that they would recover themselves. What they needed now was strength, and strength depended upon the old hope renewed and purified. They had looked for a Kingdom which would fall into their hands ready-made. The real Kingdom clamoured to them for its making, and the making of it would also make these men greater and better than they had ever been before.

So it was that our Lord gave hope to the perturbed wills and fainting hearts of the disciples. And then He turned to Peter, the man of impulsive strength, the one man among them whom the mood of inward trouble might carry to all heights

of daring and to all depths of panic cowardice, and on him He laid the greatest task of all—the task of strengthening his brethren. Along the vista of the coming years, the eye of the Master could see many and many a recurrence of that mood from which the disciples were suffering. Our natures do not change their main characteristics. They do not escape once and for all from the dangers to which their special character exposes them. They may increase their strength and alleviate the danger of their weakness. But the old kind of trouble will recur, in whatever circumstances we may be. The temptation which has once proved its power upon us will never leave us alone. We can only learn to meet its wiles more deftly, to master increasingly the secret of all its changes of form, to acquire a kind of instinct against all the subtleties of its approach. The time would come again for the disciples when, as now, the downfall of some mood of unjustifiable self-confidence would result in confusion, in a listless paralysis of the will. Then they would need the strength of Peter. And against that hour he, too, must have learned to possess his strength. For him, too, the slow and patient conversion of that impulsive strength of his into a force which he could trust, was necessary. For him, too, the call of service of the Kingdom was necessary that he might learn strength, and the first claim upon his strength would always be the strengthening of his brethren.

We sometimes, perhaps, wonder that our Lord

did not further advance the cause which He had at heart during His own lifetime, that the Kingdom whose coming was the sole burden of His message should never have gladdened His eyes on earth. We are wrong. He had done everything for His cause that the holiest of lives could have done. A cause is not an abstract thing. The moment it has dawned as a possibility and a hope in one eager soul it is already a concrete thing. It lives in the measure of the faith and the hope that have given it birth. It will live in the measure in which that faith and that hope become the faith and hope by which actual living men strive and purpose and achieve. A cause is the most concrete thing in the world. It is a living man and a living society of men. And yet how readily we deceive ourselves. How often we treat a great idea or a great human hope as if it were a kind of spiritual plaything. We fondle it and discuss it and call everyone's attention to our possession of it. We swell it out with the yeast of our vanity and knead all our petty self-importance into its mass. It becomes the expression of our unrebuked instincts and the vehicle of our paltry ambitions. And all the while we pride ourselves the more upon our disinterested devotion to a great end, to an ideal cause. It is well for us if some day the poor bubble of our blowing bursts, if some friendly truth flashes out to rebuke our wretched lie. It is better for us still if in that hour we have ears to hear the word of the greater truth which is mercy and understanding, the word which speaks to us in the depths

of that disillusion. "Return to your work for its own sake. Set it as the sun in the firmament of your life. Let it shine upon you there from above the mists of self which it will one day dispel. You can only honour your cause by what you are. You and all those who labour for it are the only concrete expression it can have. If men are to honour it they will honour it in you and through you. If they are to feel its attraction, it is through you that the attraction must come to them. To you, because this cause has first drawn and called you, it is given to strengthen your brethren, to make them worthy of its high service, too." Our Lord did for His cause all that could have been done for it. He made men who might one day be worthy of setting their hands to it, in whom it might one day become incarnate. He made them by rebuke, by comfort, by untiring patience, by infinite understanding. He made them through their weaknesses, their failures, their childish perverseness, their almost wanton misunderstanding. He instilled into them by the mere steadiness of His will and abundance of His love that spirit of self-judgment which in time disengaged strength from their weakness, righteous purpose from their waywardness, clearness of vision from their unintelligence, their victory out of their failure. And He had been able to make them men at all because they had at least always kept, even in their vanity and selfishness, the hearts of little children.

So it is that we must be made, so it is alone that God can make us. And that is the work

which His heart has found to do from eternity, the salvation of man, the leading of men by this Divine patience into the safe and sure possession of themselves in the cause of right. When we think of this, we shall understand the suffering of Jesus Christ, the suffering of all God's servants to whom it is given to see and feel the cost of making human souls, the suffering of the eternal heart of God.

Thursday in Holy Week.

"And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified: and the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed."—*St. Luke xxiii.* 23.

We turn to-day to another aspect of our Lord's Passion. He is no longer dealing with spiritual hesitancy and confusion, seeking to recover from the maelstrom of their trouble the foundered souls of the disciples. The breaking of the storm has scattered them utterly. They at least were teachable. They at least had the open heart that wanted to learn and that would learn even more in the future from its memories than it had learned from the untrustworthy feeling of the passing hour. Jesus could continue to teach them because to Him their hearts had opened. But for the moment this teachableness, without trustworthy strength behind it, was a positive instability. In a great crisis we need to know what to take our stand. We must have cast our anchors with a

grip which no violence of the storm can dislodge. Our lesson must already have been learned so thoroughly that it has become the surest part of ourselves. It is no longer the hour of learning, but the hour that will prove the worth of what we have learned. For the disciples the hour of trial proved that they had not yet sufficiently mastered their lesson. The word of truth had come to them. It had stirred their hearts, it had fired their imaginations, it had awakened in them vague hopes and desires of a better order. But as yet it had not sifted them thoroughly. It had not accomplished in them its perfect work of creating a trustworthy and steadfast self. They had not become one with it in constant will. They did not possess it as the sure compass of their being. They were only disciples as yet. Their apostleship was but a promise of the future. And their mere discipleship, their mere teachableness, their mere impressionableness to the attractions of truth, was their danger. In that hesitant mood they failed and fell. When we talk of our dependence on God, let us see to it that we do not mean a mere emotional openness to religious impressions, but the proved power of acting in His spirit in moments of stress and strain. Our dependence upon God is measured by our power of independence of all that is opposed to God. And that independence, alas! the disciples had not yet achieved.

But there were others who contributed to our Lord's Passion because their hearts had never been

opened to His teaching at all. They had learned their lesson elsewhere and their wills were fixed in it with a rigidity which was proof against all appeals to the heart. There was the passionate obstinacy of religious prejudice, there was the unthinking cruelty of popular tumult, there was the instinct of compromise of civil rule, half a stern necessity, half a cynical habit. And none of these things are teachable. They are never so sure of themselves as when they are challenged by the new word of truth. For them the world is a machine, the working of whose every spring they know, whose every valve is obedient to their fingers. Every new force that reveals itself in life is a disturbing factor which threatens to throw the machine out of gear. For them it is the herald of some incalculable mischief. They hasten to resist it by passion, by violence, by cunning. They will not consider the possibility of its value. It is enough to know that it is there for the full measure of their hostility to be aroused.

These were the forces that wrought our Lord's Passion. The Master of life, the Man in Whom God spoke His perfect Word, died as a blasphemer, as one charged with blasphemous denial of the word of God. Was there ever such an indictment of mere orthodoxy, such a revelation of the dangers to which organised religion is always exposed? God's truth comes to us in every life which in lonely agony fights its way towards some larger faith in Him, which holds on in patient and suffering obedience to the fuller vision of His will which as

yet the world cannot see, which it is to see one day through him. It is well, indeed, that such a soul should be tried not alone by inner doubt and difficulty—as it is always tried, but by outer opposition as well. Truth must always be purified by this process of sifting, must always be strengthened by having to meet every legitimate challenge. And our challenge of a new truth is always legitimate. We cannot as yet measure its importance, its exact bearing escapes us, for us it is not as yet truth at all. But at least we ought not to denounce it forthwith as a lie or to harden ourselves against it so that one day when it becomes stronger and more certain of itself we may be found arrayed against it with implacable hostility in the full passion of accumulated prejudice. And that is just the tendency of organised religion everywhere, of every church, of every religious society that has ever existed. And yet, to put it at its very lowest, how foolish, how short-sighted, how faithless such a policy is! The old faith is there all the time. Thousands of human souls have been nurtured on it, and whatever changes may come, will be nurtured on it still. It has been and will still continue to be the witness to God in innumerable human lives. Not one jot or one tittle of it can pass away. So the Master Himself had testified of that law for blasphemy against which its authorised guardians put Him to death. He was the fulfilment of that law. It was in Him that every jot and tittle of it was saved. And yet through Him also its outer form was revolutionised.

Its sacrifices disappeared, its special customs were abandoned, the adherents of the law as it was renewed and revivified in Him became a separate society from the adherents of the law as He had found it. And the whole history of religion has witnessed to the same kind of transformation. If the outer forms of religion have known no such critical moment of change, yet they have endured a gradual process of renewal. The spirit labouring within them in heavy travail has soared towards higher reaches of vision and has forced the old forms, with change of less or more, to speak its fuller word. The Spirit of Jesus has been in the body of His disciples, wherever and whenever they have been most true to Him, leading them into all truth. What one age could not have borne, another age has learned. And in all this process the ferment of social energy has counted for much, but the vision of the individual soul has always counted for more. They have indeed different roles to play in eliciting the truth of God. It is the lonely soul that must always make the great venture, and its venture will involve perforce denial as well as affirmation. It cannot proclaim the necessity of a higher form of truth without proclaiming also the insufficiency of the lower. It cannot insist upon the higher matters of the law without depreciating the tithing of mint and anise and cummin. There are times when to allow its due weight to custom is to be false to truth, when truth must break through custom in wild eruption if it is to be truth at all.

And then again there comes the time when the old earth settles down again to its normal work of growth. Its torn and furrowed surface knits itself together again. The formless heaps of dust and scoriæ, the solidified lava-streams that cover it, take on their garment of vegetation, and the ordered fields where men live and labour stretch themselves where once earth reeled and tottered in its throes of agony. So it is that the religious society extracts its religious heritage from that travailing of the spirit of truth in some volcanic soul which had once shaken humanity. But the social labour in the disengagement of religious truth is even more than this. For it is the mission of the religious society to restrain, to correct, to generalise, the solitary witness. That witness needs to be reduced to the level of average human possibilities, and that is what the religious society always does, often only too readily and with too complacent a valuation of human weakness.

But when we have said all this, let us remember two things. Firstly, we can never look back to Gethsemane and Calvary without remembering that our hope is in the lonely soul. If the salvation of men was to be wrought, if men were ever to attain to sure possession of themselves as sons of God, Jesus had to endure to the uttermost the rebuke, not of sinners, but of those whom He Himself called the righteous. He had to tread the winepress of the wrath of God's people alone. And secondly, the Church is never in such danger of being utterly false to God as when, in the zeal

of its refusal of some new word of His, it allies itself with those forces of easy-going compromise whose one object it is to preserve an outward order at all costs, or calls to its aid that most terrible weapon of unthinking popular violence. Never in all history has there been heard anything so terrifying in its inhumanity as the instancy of those voices demanding that He should be crucified. And yet its inhumanity is, alas! so human when the urgency of religious prejudice is behind it. Once and again it has been heard since that day of dread, and it is only too possible that it may be heard again, with the approval of the servants of Him Whom it crucified.

Meditations for Good Friday

"Not the smallest spark of good ever sprang up in fallen man, no kind of faith, hope, or trust in God, no patience in adversity, no self-denial, no love of God, or desire of doing His will; no truths of humility, meekness, and compassion ever did, or could, work in the heart and spirit of any Son of Adam, but solely for this reason, because all these tempers were the Spirit of Christ's Process, which Spirit was inspoken, or ingrafted, into fallen man, as soon as God looked with pity, compassion, love, and relief towards Adam and Eve."

WILLIAM LAW.

Meditations for Good Friday

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

The understanding of others is at all times difficult. Between ourselves and others there lies the mist of selfness through which we see only distorted, unreal shapes. The actual lives that men and women live, their trials, their troubles, their inner difficulties, are all so far away. They are obscured by our moods, our opinions, our individual habits of thought and feeling. For most of us the world is not made up of men and women, each one a mystery challenging individual knowledge or remaining hopelessly unknown, but of vague classes arranged according to some superficial external standard or some equally unreal abstraction of inner judgment. There are the people who profess our opinions and the people who reject them. And yet the adoption or the rejection of a particular set of opinions gives us no real clue to character. It is all a matter of training, of custom, of temperament. Nothing may more effectually conceal a man's character from us than the fact that he seems to agree with us in mere matters of opinion. For opinion is as often a method of concealing our real character from ourselves as it is a means of expressing it to others. The mean man so often escapes the torture of realising his own meanness by the self-deceit of generous opinions. You will find monsters of selfishness quite honestly professing the most

humane feelings, usually in regions in which they never have been and never can be practically tested. And on the other hand you will find men and women whose hearts are naturally open to every suffering and whose hands instinctively find the helpful thing to do, hiding from themselves in a real temper of humility behind an assumed mask of cynicism. There is nothing which more generally conceals men from themselves, not to say from one another, than the mere abstract opinions which they profess. Among the adherents of any opinion you may think of you will find men of every possible shade and variety of character. Or again think of how the real life of others is obscured for us by our transient moods or by the general tone of our own individual life. If for yourself the world is rose-coloured, you will find it hard to understand the gloom to which another soul is habitually condemned by its temperament. If your eye is jaundiced by suspicion, you will never understand the direct and single-minded nature. People of nervous and excitable temperament find it hard to understand the calm and self-contained. We judge others by their defect of our qualities, not by their possession of their own.

But the tragedy of life is not merely that it is difficult to understand, but that we so often make no effort to understand. Have you ever thought why it was that our Lord so decisively forbade us to judge others while He reserved the judgment of men as His own peculiar province? It

is because all our judgment is apt to be from the outside and just on that account likely to be a judgment of condemnation. What we mean by judgment is often nothing more than summing up a man's character in its difference from our own, or in its difference from some abstract standard which we dare not apply conscientiously to ourselves. And so it means missing altogether his real merits, merits which happen to have no correspondence with anything in ourselves. Or perhaps we miss his merits just as fatally by appraising him on the ground of some superficial resemblance to ourselves which does not touch real elements of character either in him or in us. But our Lord's judgment consists in seeing what a man is, and by seeing it helping him to see it. True judgment is the supreme influence of one character over another, the supreme mission of character in the world of life. The long patient development of our Lord's personality resulted just in this—that He could become the only infallible judge of men. For His judgment never merely condemned. The judgment which condemns only is morally useless. It drives a man back upon himself and justifies him in remaining what he is. Use the weapon of condemnation only and even if you are right in your judgment you have done your best to make a man obstinate in his wrong-doing. But if you can only make a man feel that you understand him, that you even want to understand him, you have gained the right and the power to show him the truth about himself.

You have opened his eyes so that he can judge himself – the only judgment which is effectual. And that was the invariable manner of our Lord's judgment. You remember how He delivered the woman who stood abashed before her self-righteous accusers not only from their condemnation but from the bonds of her own sin. Her accusers melted away before the silent working of that Divine probe, "He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone." And then she herself withdrew, repentant and submissive, to the life of self-condemnation and self-recovery before that supreme judgment of the heart that had attained complete mastery of itself, "Neither do I condemn thee, Go and sin no more, Go and condemn thyself so that the old life may fall away from thee." Or again think of how in all His dealings with His disciples He never openly repulsed their crass spiritual stupidity, but always by some suggestive parable, some delicate hint, sought to open their eyes to the true measure of spiritual realities. Think of the angry disappointment, the desperate rebellion of the soul, from which we suffer when we find that we have failed in making those who trusted us, those who seemed anxious to learn from us, understand our meaning, when we find that after all they have most fatally misconceived all we had striven so hard to teach. At such moments we think we have failed utterly because we have not completely succeeded. The troubled passionate revolt of the soul from its own defeat blinds us even to the measure of success we have had. We think

that others have learned nothing from us because they have not learned all we desired. And we are inclined to visit upon them in a kind of angry contempt which hurts ourselves and undoes them the sense of soreness at our failure. But there is nothing of that impatience, that want of moral imagination, about our Lord. At the supreme moment of His life, when He might have looked for the comfort of perfect understanding from at least those friends on whom He had lavished the perfect treasure of His love and His example, He finds on the contrary even in them the grossest denseness of spiritual perception. As they sat around the table after the supreme manifestation of the Divinest love that earth has known, after the terrible announcement by a tragic irony of counterpoise of the last and basest of human betrayals, what was it that those disciples of the Divine Master found to discuss? Only this, "Which of them should be accounted the greatest" in the coming Kingdom. And yet think of the Divine patience and understanding with which our Lord meets a situation which to us would be the most terrible disillusionment. Once more, after so many efforts which seem to have been all in vain, He seeks to make plain the true nature of spiritual greatness. By the subtle suggestiveness of which only a perfect intelligence and love is master, He points exactly the contrast which would appeal to them—the contrast between the nature of that Gentile power which if only by the instinct of nationality they detested, and the very different

power which could alone be worthy of the Divine Kingdom that would replace the hated Gentile rule. Perhaps there is nothing more beautiful in the whole Gospel story than this instance of Divine patience and of the Divine tact by which it worked. And then, to crown it all, there comes that superb triumph of generosity, the hearty recognition of all that they had been to Him coming at the very moment of their most fatal misconception of what He had been to them:— "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a Kingdom as my Father hath appointed unto Me." It is this that brings out the best in men, this power of understanding which is never disappointed by their natural failures, which never fails to recognise and appreciate at its full worth all the good that is in them. And once more and supremely in the midst of the death-agony of the Cross the Divine quality in human character expressed itself. Against Scribes and Pharisees alone our Lord had had all His life through to utter the stern, uncompromising sentence of condemnation. On the heights of their religious superiority no lesser word from a simple teacher of the people could ever have reached their ears. And condemnation of them was not condemnation of individual human beings, but of a system which deadened themselves and others, which made of men "whited sepulchres," full of rottenness and decay. Our Lord's teaching did not need to be a mere negative condemnation of such a

system. It was in its positive character the most unescapable challenge of Pharisaism. And the Pharisees recognised the challenge. It was because they felt that there was no room for compromise between their system and the teaching of Jesus that they staked all upon the great final effort to crush Him. By a true instinct they felt that the teaching and the Teacher were one, that to crush the One if it were possible was to crush the other. Here was an instance where a man did not go beyond his own experience, where truth was that which He had Himself faced and known. But it was very different with the Pharisees themselves. Nothing was more clear to our Lord than the distinction which sympathy had to make between the Pharisees and their teaching. The latter He had consistently condemned and themselves, too, so far as they were merely its representatives, so far as He had to do with them only as incarnations of a system. But He saw so well that they were only the slaves of their system, that they did not hold it in possession but were held in possession by it. And the moment He had to meet them as mere human beings possessed by the devil of their own malignant hatred and fanaticism, the moment they ceased to be the mere leaders of a religious propaganda and came instead to be its victims in the evil actions which it entailed, all His pity and understanding went out to them also, and the sublime word on the Cross was uttered—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." That was the true judg-

ment, the Divine judgment, upon those men who wrought the death of Jesus. Only He ever attained to such judgment, to the judgment which can account for the direst hostility from which one is suffering, which can see in an effort of almost impersonal selflessness the concurrence of trivial causes leading up to the tragic result, which understands the process whereby others justify themselves in their enmity, and so can sincerely forgive it.

It is hard for us at any time to get out of ourselves, out of the self-made prison of prejudice and passion and personal concerns, sufficiently to be just to others. It is harder than ever when the soul's real life of sympathy is dulled or swoons away under the agony of great physical pain. We know how hard it is to be ordinarily just to others, how easy it is to be brutal, only perhaps because we are worried or preoccupied. And if we don't know it those who have to live with us do. But hardest of all is it while stretched on the rack of pain to be fair to those who have caused us to suffer, to understand the motives of their enmity well enough to be able to forgive them. Sometimes it seems to me that it is almost a blasphemy for us to speak of the Cross—for those of us I mean who know nothing of the refining mystery of pain, who meet the anxious affection of others with the savagery of a bearish temper only because we are worried by a little overwork or by some trifling opposition to our wills. There are people who are always

talking about their nerves when, if they used less equivocal language, they ought to talk of their unbridled selfishness—people who almost caress their anæmic sufferings in order that they may indulge in the luxury of a more total self-absorption. And yet these are the very people who are ready to make of the emotional qualities of religion a kind of anodyne for their spurious woes. Let us at least in the presence of the Cross try to be sincere with ourselves. It means the hardest, the most consistent, of all spiritual disciplines—a discipline which forms not only the strength of the soul, but its quality; the discipline of sympathy, of the intelligence of other souls. Only the sympathetic soul is morally strong, and only the soul that is strong can be sympathetic. It is great pain that tries this sympathy which is strength, this strength which is sympathy. But it has been made in the discipline of unconsidered hours, in the ceaseless effort during days of apparent calm to crush out of the soul all the selfishness which would prevent us being fair to others, in the determination to make of our lives the growing knowledge of others' lives. It is the last thing perhaps that some of us who talk most of it do. May God forgive us and help us now and henceforward earnestly to resolve to understand, with hearts eager and curious to learn, those to whose lives He has brought us near, so that no trial of our faith in them will find us unprepared, so that we may be able, when the great proof of our own suffering from it comes, to feel that the

evil of men's devising is due infinitely more to want of thought than to want of heart.

"This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

THE rude juxtapositions of life conceal the most startling contrasts and varieties of character. Men pass by noting only similarities of position, of circumstance, of rank, of outer habit. And these accidental proximities of men do indeed produce a certain superficial resemblance which may well deceive the casual observer of life. But beneath them the essential differences of character are always manifesting themselves for him who has eyes to see. To the man who sees from a distance, even more from a moral than a spacial distance, there is such a thing as the life of a class. And his perception has some shadow of reality to justify it. For by living in the same circumstances, with the same difficulties to face, exposed to the same necessities, men do form a kind of uniform social code, even a more or less uniform moral code, under which they live the separate life of a class. But to the man who looks a little more closely there is disclosed an infinite variety where there seemed a monotonous uniformity. After all, men are divided as we wish to divide them. It is the standard of judgment we apply that accounts for the division we actually make. On Calvary the ordinary incurious inhabitant of Jerusalem, accustomed to the symbol of Roman punitive justice, saw three human figures hanging upon the Cross, undergoing a common punishment. There were others, indeed, who could distinguish

between the martyred victim of religious fanaticism and His companions in the last agony of death. And again the crisis of suffering revealed a radical difference of character between those two chance victims of Roman law, immortalised by their last association with the Divine Master of life. The soul of the one was marked by a certain rough heroism, the heroism of defiant endurance of physical pain. Out of the silence of the common agony of the sufferers he flings the rude ironical challenge, "If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us." There rings the contemptuous defiance of pain in the overbearing bravado of a man who has long lived his life at grips with death. His word is a mockery of Jesus, but it is even more a mockery of himself and of the hopeless and cruel fate which he had felt life to be. But the soul of the other is of a different stamp. There lingers in it something of the child's tenderness and with it something of the child's hope and expectation of help in the midst of pain and after the passing of pain. But there is something deeper still which distinguishes them. These two men witness to the wide differences of spiritual outlook that there are in men. To the one man the inevitable end has come at last, has come with violence as he had always feared the chance of its coming. And there is the last word, the last hope. There is nothing to be done but to shut one's soul against unmanly complaining and accept the inevitable. There is something of the proud, relentless silence of Iago, a deliberate petrifying of all

of the soul that might yield to the impulses of fear or need, about this thief. He hardens himself against the inexorableness of a fate which is not even cruel, only blind. Even his last contemptuous outburst is not so much the derision of Jesus as the derision of life. The huge, unmeaning fraud is coming to an end, and the man who knows it for what it is pours out the last vial of his vitriolic scorn upon the Man who dares to believe in it still : " Save Thyself and us." But his companion in guilt and punishment is of a different mould. By some rare gift of Nature there remains in him still the instinct of true moral values, and perhaps even deeper than that and accounting for it the instinct of the eternal in life. In the midst of the dissolution of physical power, stretched on the rack of agony which for most of us dislocates the powers of the soul, he still believes in the coming of the Kingdom, clings to it as the one certainty amid the ruin of life. " Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." Is it the freshness and the dependence of the child-heart that naturally turns for help to the strength by its side—is it that that has kept so triumphantly alive this simplicity of belief in the great eternal issues of life ? At any rate, it is just because he believes so instinctively in the Kingdom that he believes in Jesus also, that he measures the failure of his own life and his companion's with such certainty against the moral sublimity of Jesus. " Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation ? And we indeed justly : for we receive the

due reward for our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss."

And surely this is the real difference of men's spiritual stature—this power or want of power of clinging to the unseen in life. Where it exists, a man never quite loses grip upon spiritual realities. It only needs the great opportunity to revive all the lost or spent forces of his soul and rouse them again into spontaneous activity. It only needs the nearness of Jesus to recover the lost soul to itself in recognition of Him. But where the sense of the unseen has vanished or been deliberately crushed out, no opportunity can recover its power. The nearness of great spiritual forces is only the more effectual condemnation of such a soul. Its very sincerity shuts it up from what it regards as false hopes within the prison of its own despair. Its courage refuses to be deceived by the comfort of what to it are only illusions.

Let us think of this, that the true test of a soul's vitality is its capacity of real faith in the unseen. The life of the soul is its aspiration, its desire for fulness of satisfaction, its refusal to rest satisfied with any mere result of achievement. Like everything that is really alive, its first necessity is to live and not merely to enjoy. Enjoyment indeed is a very real part of the demand of life. We like to taste the sweets of our accomplishment. But their savour is only a momentary satisfaction. Life's true need is to leave behind all the soon-exhausted pleasure of results and to press forward to the higher and more vital

pleasure of new endeavour and new attainment. And this is especially true of the highest life, the life of the soul. For it especially the most satisfying pleasure comes to be, just, service. The distinction of religion is that it removes us altogether from the world of illusion in which men look to results for their satisfaction. Or rather it alone unifies activity and result. That is to say the real result of the highest kind of activity is a fresh power of activity. The real result of the soul's use of its life is that it gains more life and demands a wider sphere in which to make its life tell. Its vision of what life is grows with its own exercise. Just think of your own experience as you have made your own little imperfect attempts to be true to God's will. You started with brilliant schemes of what God had called you to do. There opened out before you perhaps something of the promise of the new heaven and the new earth. You had a clear view of what God's righteousness claimed of you. Well, the result of your efforts has been dismal disappointment in the matter of your actual achievement. The results you expected have not been attained, or when they have they have not had the effect you desired. The evils against which you fought have disappeared indeed where you fought them, but only to spring up in a new form and in a new place. You thought to replace the evil conditions by good, a morally diseased atmosphere of life by a morally healthy one, and you find that the only result of your effort has been to replace

one form of evil, one degree of disease, by another—you cannot even be sure whether a more or less fatal one. And what has been the result of all this experience for yourself? Well, one thing at least it has done for you. It has tested the quality of your soul. It has proved the motives which led you on to that first vision of the Kingdom, of the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Was it a kind of loose generosity of nature mingled with a good deal of vanity and self-importance and a desire to be well thought of by men? If it was, it was perfectly natural, it was inevitable, that you should measure your success by the things you did, by the fuss you made, by mere material accomplishment. And it was still more natural that you should utterly fail even in that sphere of mere outward change of conditions. Who were you that you should dare to put your hand to the pure work of God and hope for His cooperation or dream that you were cooperating with Him when the sole driving-power of your heart was the heady fumes of vanity? But if you really wanted to be at one with the will of righteousness, humbly to do the best you saw, then in spite of all external disappointment, a new power of service and of faith has unconsciously grown up within you. You believe more in righteousness and its ultimate triumph because you have humbly and faithfully tried to serve it. And more than that, your faith has silently entered through the inspiration of your example into many a life which you never tried directly to

influence. Nay, the very conditions of human life which you had longed to modify in the interests of righteousness and which as you thought you had so dismally failed in modifying—they, too, have really yielded to the power of your action because you have put a new spirit into the people who use them. Expect the touch of life from changes in the material organisation of life and you will be hopelessly deceived for ever. But put your own life, your own sincere love of right, your unaffected interest in and understanding of your fellowmen into those changes, and you have given them indeed the vivifying touch. Men feel that those changes have been wrought by the toil and sweat of loving souls, that they bear upon them the sacred sanction of the martyrdom out of which they have been born. Who can help feeling the added worth that attaches to all of the great Lord Shaftesbury's work of reform because of the dignity of his character and the utter simplicity of his motive? Only tell the story of that man's life to those whose material lot his devotion has improved and even the least imaginative of them will recognise the sacredness of the gift which they enjoy. At any rate, this one thing at least stands out clear. What we do gets its value from the quality and the intensity of life we put into it. We make the external world alive with ourselves. There is no use trying to change it beyond the measure of our own inner change. That is the one thing we cannot do. The conditions of life, the external world in which we live,

are but the mirror which reveals us to ourselves. They discharge their true ministry when they stir us into dissatisfaction with ourselves. It is not because man is dissatisfied with these things that he longs to change even them. It is because he is dissatisfied with himself. Let a man sink into the sloth and inertness of the soul which is satisfied with itself, and he will accept also without even the power of protest the degraded conditions which correspond to his degraded life.

So, then, it is the inner life which alone is real; and it must be real or the universe with all its activity and unceasing change is an illusion, a much ado about nothing, the imposture of a myriad disconnected accidents parading under the guise of a uniform purpose. The real life of you and me is something whose only ultimate satisfaction lies in its own eternal growth. The end of that endless growth, the eternal beginning in which it had its origin, the continuous inspiration on which from hour to hour it depends, the bond by which it is vitally united to all other growths of soul—all these are one, they are God. And it is faith in God which ultimately distinguishes men. For remember that means more than we think. It means real knowledge of the nature and the destiny of our own life. Men move about the world to-day, organise its activities on lines of their own devising, shape its destinies for good or evil in the humblest things they do or even refrain from doing. They do this in virtue of a tireless, irrepressible force that is within them.

And the character of their action depends in the last resort on their beliefs in the nature of this life. If they believe that it is one of countless manifestations of energy which have no particular meaning, which are not guided by a common inspiration and limited by a common control, then they may be courageous, they may "make their heart as a millstone, set their face as a flint," but they have neither hope nor trust, nothing of the spring and freshness of the life that looks to an endless future of growth, nothing of the depth and intensity of the life that can never fathom its own immensity. While on the other hand those who feel that their individual life is an organ, however humble and remote, of the Eternal Soul of the universe, of a God Whose heart must be the perfect satisfaction of all the best desires that have ever imperfectly dawned in our hearts, Whose will must be the completion of all the best on which our wills have ever been set—they will always in the midst of the worst disappointments, even in the stress of moral disaster and ruin, keep some well-spring of hope, some water of healing, fresh in the soul. How the poor thief upon the Cross may have kept it we know nothing. But there at least it was. There is a virgin freshness of soul in the man who even in the midst of pain can condemn himself and see another's innocence, especially when the judgment of others had equalised their moral worth. It is not many of us who would reverse the judgments of the world to right another at our own expense. It is not many of us who

on the rack of suffering could have such simplicity of faith in the Kingdom of God, and such immediate recognition of those who have power in that Kingdom as this man had. This was no sudden conversion. Whatever the outward history of this man may have been, whatever may have brought him to the Cross, he had somehow kept his heart attuned to the great hopes and open to the great vision of spiritual humanity. Let us pray that we too may cherish the hopes and attain the vision by which, under whatever circumstances and in whatever guise we may meet the Christ, we, too, may recognise Him as this man did.

"Woman, behold thy Son. Behold Thy Mother."

We have never adequately contemplated the death of Jesus if we have not faced the agony of parting, of leaving those we love to the shock of circumstance, above all of leaving behind a life which has given all its ministries to our making and which has come to expect in its close the comfort and the support of our ministries. There is something sublime about the relation of mother and son. The weakness that makes and cherishes strength, the strength that owes itself utterly to and is ready to spend itself in the service of weakness—that is the mystical secret of this relationship. And when it remains unbroken throughout life, there is surely no greater bitterness in the cup of death than for the young and strong to

be compelled to abandon the weak and the ageing to all the chances of life. And when we think of the agony of Jesus in this parting, let us not forget also the torture of the mother's heart as she keeps her soul knit in that rigidity of patient suffering which those know so well who have watched by the death-bed of those they love. To be brave while the sword is piercing your own soul in the pain you cannot alleviate of one who is the life of your life—that is the triumph of human endurance and faith. The true greatness of the last moments of life is their naturalness, their composure, their retention of interest in all the closest concerns of the heart. When you see the poor man who has never perhaps all his life through thought much of what are called his religious duties turn his dying eyes with their dumb eagerness of enquiry round upon all the loved faces and light up with ineffable happiness as he says his last mute farewell to wife and children, when you see the last pathetic flicker of life in the blank look of disappointment because the long-departed face that has come near again in the wild search of the dying memory is no longer there,—you have learned the mystery of the Divine stirrings that are at work in the rudest heart of man. No, a man's real religion is not proved in turning to new thoughts and new hopes in that hour. So far as the new hopes have place there at all, it is because they spring naturally out of the old hopes and affections come to their full measure, realising themselves in their full meaning. The reality of

life is the preparation, the readiness for death—the readiness for it in the constant ordering of all duties and all claims, in the reality and reach of the affections and responsibilities which bind us to others. It is thus that the soul is made, that the true life is developed, that the sense of the eternal is gained and kept. There are many for whom the reality of the future, the intensity of the present, the eternal here and hereafter are but obscure objects of thought. And yet in the humblest home there are forces at work which keep that sense of the eternal always alive. The home ought to be for all men, and indeed is for most, the ante-chamber of Heaven. The hopes of life are supremely centred in it, the dying thought clings to it, and through the spiritual ministry of its claims the life of God still stirs in the world. The most sacred thought of the dying Jesus is the quiet, deliberate choice of a home for His mother. Amid all the anguish of physical pain, amid the tumult of reproach and insult and cruel frenzy that rages around Him, His thought turns to the most obvious and simple duty in perfect calm and composure of spirit.

And think, too, of the choice He makes. The last legacy of His love to her He loves most is a love like His own. The best legacy we can ever leave to those from whom death forces us to part is an affection which they can trust. We are full of anxiety to leave our children well provided with the goods of the world. Whether we are leaving them behind at our own enforced farewell to earth

or whether they leave us while we are still here to go out into the world and face it on their own account, our chief concern is that their mere material position should be secured. How often we are ready to sacrifice their higher interests for this quite subordinate one. We are more anxious to place our children beyond the reach of financial stress than to fit them for a useful life, more concerned to make their life easy than to train it to be helpful and strenuous. We think more perhaps of the social rank than of the individual worth of the friends we try to procure for them. We place a higher value on a rich marriage than on one based on reality of affection and community of the deeper interests. We resent far more what we call the foolish and quixotic projects of our children than their mean and contemptible ones. How fatally wrong it all is! What an indictment it all is of the reality of our affection for those whom we profess to love, and who have been given to us just that we may train them by our love for eternity. If our affection does not desire and do all it can to procure for them here the things that are of eternal value, how false we are to our trust! Seek to plant in your children from the first the desire of the best and worthiest things in life. Remember that your own life is a trust for them. Once they have been given to you, it is no longer yours only but theirs also. Care only for the highest things yourselves or they will inevitably discover, with the sure instinct of children, your falseness when you idly recommend the highest

things to them. Children's character, their attitude towards the world, the moral values that they attach to things, are a direct result of the moral atmosphere in which they live. No teaching will produce the right character if it is not aided and abetted by the ceaseless silent force of example, and example too which is never simulated but always natural. And when at last they leave you for their own venture on the ocean of the world, see to it so far as you can that they go forth in the spiritual safety of bracing companionships and healthy human influences. It is the best legacy your love can leave them. Do as much more as you can, but never sacrifice this inestimable gift for the sake of those of lesser worth.

And then, again, think of a further aspect of our Lord's provision for the future of those He loves. He knows so well that when the ancient attachments of life are cut away, it must knit itself afresh at new points of duty, with new-spun threads of service. The hardness and rigour of the spiritual life is that it can never forego its own activity for any breach of its dearest ties, without losing its quality and its force. It cannot withdraw into an unreal world of mere emotional luxury. The claims of life are undeniable in the presence of the most irreparable loss. You may have lost your heart's dearest, but you have to eat your dinner or give your weary body the rest, and your weary soul the oblivion, of sleep that they both desire. And impossible as it seems to you, you do both. It is the first touch of God's

healing hand, the first stirring of the reviving force by which He knits afresh your connection with life. Life is service, service as long as it endures. Not only its highest inspiration, its felt nobility, its sense of the eternal, but the unfailing mitigation of all its pains, its most certain consolations and its ever-reviving hopes lie in service. Jesus left the last and greatest legacy of love to those two whom He loved most in all the world when He bound their broken lives together in a new bond of mutual service. How the memory of Him they had loved lived on in that new home. How He must have dwelt with them always, a silent, invisible Presence more real than all things of sense —than the burning glory of days of sunlight, than the oppressive quiet of Eastern evenings, than the familiar stretch of hill and plain, than all Nature's customary framework in which their simple lives were set. And He dwelt with them all the more really because speech so often silenced itself in presence of the great theme that filled their hearts, because their hands were always full of ordinary work and their thoughts always engrossed in ordinary interests. It is so that God trains us for His Heaven. More surely in the home than even in the Church, more fully in service than even in meditation, does the comfort of God's presence descend upon the aching hearts of His children. Let us pray for the benediction of that Presence on its own terms. Let us pray for the power of knitting ourselves afresh to God's world of life through God's spirit of service, by whatever agony

of effort, after whatever agony of loss. Let us pray for the soul's true companionships, for the heart's intimacy with all that is really worthy and noble and eternal in the lives of men. Let us pray for the power and the desire to surround those we love with these spiritual guardians that their lives may be braced and upheld to the end.

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

THERE is a phrase which haunts us with a vague sense of terror however little our thoughts may turn to life's ending—"the bitterness of death." That bitterness of death we have seldom seen. For it is the instinct of life to cling with hope to its own permanence so long as consciousness remains. But few men have really to face the certain fact that they will never rise again from the bed of pain on which they have been laid. There is something infinitely pathetic about that deception of unquenchable hope with which the loving watcher by the bedside dare not interfere. Even men of the strongest will—perhaps they more than any—cannot be quite sincere with themselves, cannot admit as conclusive the verdict of the doctor which in the case of any other person they would unhesitatingly accept. The tenacity with which life clings to itself is a miracle of self-delusion. But at least it robs death for most men of much of its bitterness. True, it is its very bitterness which appals such strong natures, but

in hardening themselves against it, in fighting it with all the forces of the will while any strength remains to fight, they rob it of half its sting, they succeed in avoiding something of that bitterness of death which they so much dread. Or, again, some may slip away from life so gradually, so unconscious of all the terror of the great change, that they never realize death's bitterness. But there is one way of meeting death which always appals us even to think of. It is death at the hands of public justice. The deliberateness of that step from the full life of the senses into the annihilation of all sense makes an appeal of peculiar terror to the most listless imagination. It is a type of the death which we all pictured in affrighted musings of our childhood upon the nature of this last mystery of experience. Then we thought of death as the deliberate and conscious passage from the full activity of the known and the familiar into the nothingness of the unknown. And if men ever taste the full bitterness of dissolution it is when their bodies and souls, full of the abounding sap of life, are at a given moment bound upon the rack of a most painful death.

It was from the midst of this dread experience of the bitterness of death that our Lord's cry of deepest agony broke forth: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The words themselves were words of a familiar Psalm. It is strange how in moments of bitter intensity words come to us from we know not where, vague echoes of old memories by which we join ourselves to the experi-

ences of others so remote from our own life in time and place and circumstance, so near to it in the stern reality of human kinship. At such times we can hardly use words of our own, because we seem to be not ourselves merely, but a fragment of the agonized life of humanity which passes to its victory by the same constant path of pain. The cry of universal human sorrow escapes our lips—the inarticulate groaning of the spirit in which all men share, or else words which have themselves grown old with the burden of human woe. And this cry of our Lord was the last witness to the fulness of His humanity, the last bond of union with the immemorial agony of man. There are moments of suffering when the tortured body drags the soul from its citadel into association with its own defeat and despair. There are moments of darkness when God Himself is hidden from the soul that is nearest to Him. Suffering itself seems motiveless, a mere abandonment of the infinitely weak by the infinitely strong. It seems so impossible that we in the unutterable weakness of our suffering can be the chosen instruments of a Divine purpose. The sense of purpose in life is lost to us altogether. God's face is hidden amid the gross darkness. We lie crushed and bruised amid the wreckage of our highest hopes, our most unselfish efforts. We have laboured incessantly for some great design in which self had no share, we have taxed all our force for its accomplishment. We have incurred the hostility or endured the misunderstanding of men in order

that we might be true to it, and the sole result is that our health is irretrievably broken, that we have to linger out some useless years of life on the rack of ceaseless pain, that we see the work for which we have striven abandoned and scorned. In the darkness of such overwhelming and hopeless defeat it is hard to see the face of God, to be sure of His presence, to trust still with a supreme, victorious faith in His favour. If you have ever seen the selfless, loving woman steel her weakness to heroic endurance that the work of her poor worn fingers may support the sister who is weaker and more helpless than herself, only to break down hopelessly before the task of love is accomplished, before the blessed release has come, then you will understand the cry of the anguished soul, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" You will know what it means if you have seen the maimed life that had no avenue of helpfulness and of joy save eyes and ears, that served others by the delicate work which those eyes could plan and execute, that gained its brightest joy and consolation through the inspiring words of others—if you have seen it suddenly robbed of its only means of helpfulness and enjoyment and delivered helpless to a blind and silent world. In the pride of health and strength you do not know, you cannot know, the mystery of this dereliction, of this seeming desertion of the soul by God. But it is none the less an experience which the great souls may have to suffer, which they alone perhaps can suffer. Yet they are just the souls who cannot yield

to it permanently. They feel that desertion because God has been so near, because He will be so near, to them again. They at least of all men "believe in soul, are very sure of God." For them there is no permanent life, no enduring hope, apart from duty, even if it be only the duty of endurance. They "know not anything so fair as is the smile upon her face," even when her face seems to others sternest and most forbidding. It is only for a moment that the light of God's face is hidden from them in the darkness of disappointment and pain.

Or, again, there are times when even the greatest souls despair of their mission. The very greatness and uniqueness of the ideal which has inspired them has provoked the implacable hostility of a world that hates to be disturbed. All the unintelligence and impassivity of the conservative temper, of the temper that longs for peace at any price, even at the price of spiritual death, all the self-complacent *vis inertiæ* of the established order, have been roused for once to a fury of opposition. The innumerable petty forces of evil, and what is almost worse, of determined misunderstanding, have been let loose. The great ideal founders amid the rage and ravin of the storm. The war of human passions is joined about the thought, the effort, that was to have lightened a little the load of the world's wrong. The tocsin that was to have awakened right has only sounded its knell, has only called into activity the forces which seek to destroy it. At such times it is hard to keep one's

faith. It is hard to see that the forces which are on our side are greater than those that are against us.

The loneliness of the soul is always terrible. And yet the soul that listens for the highest claims of God must be alone. We cannot catch them amidst the din of the crowd. God calls us to the desert if we would follow Him—the desert of patient and lonely effort, the desert of hopes and aims that are beyond the common reach, the desert of all God's adventurers and pioneers. And do we realise the terrors of the desert? There is nothing which heartens man so much as the familiar road, the beaten track, the echo of the treadings of myriad feet. There is nothing which brings to even the bravest heart the horror of a nameless dread so certainly as the interminable stretch of a trackless land. It is when men are driven by the spirit into the wilderness, when they are compelled to venture forth alone into the unknown upon the high quests of God, that they may be tempted sometimes to doubt even His guidance, to suspect themselves of having been deluded by a spiritual will-o'-the-wisp. It is not wonderful that Luther doubted at times whether he could be right, whether he was following the higher leading of God, when he felt the whole force of Christendom set in array against him, when even among those who followed him he had to contend against the devils of faction and license. The tragedy of the soul that God's vocation has made so solitary that it can look for understanding to none but God is

just this, that it must have its moments of dreadful doubt whether even He is sustaining it, whether it is really following His call or the mere echo of its own desires. But the hesitation of the heroic souls is only for a moment. Their doubt is but the growing pains of their faith. They have lived so near to God that no defeat can finally crush their faith in Him, that no darkness of the troubled spirit can finally hide His face from them. Their loneliness is the pledge of God's guidance. They could not have left the world of common hopes and aims and aspirations if there had been no voice to call them, and the reality of that voice is witnessed to for them by the fulness of life which obedience to it has given them. So it is that the face of God is always disclosed to men amid the most impenetrable outer darkness. The light in which His face is seen is within. Let us kneel in abasement of spirit before the mystery of that agonised gaze of Jesus straining into the darkness of the world which He had loved and for which He had laboured, and finding there for a moment no comforting cheer of His Father's face, only a Walpurgis-night of the hosts of evil. Let us pour out our hearts of deeper gratitude and more abounding love to Him, because for Him too there could be the moment of high doubt that comes to all who believe strenuously, who fight unceasingly, who die triumphantly for God's right. Let us pray that we through all dread and darkness may hold fast to His skirts, and even when the vision of God seems withdrawn from a world abandoned to

the fury of its own passion and the cruelty of its own selfishness may still find in His face the light of God.

"I thirst."

After the agony of soul, the pain of body. We have heard of Eastern ascetics in whom spiritual exaltation had entirely conquered the ordinary appetites of the body—men who can go for days without food and who seem to have steeled themselves against the feeling of ordinary physical pain. But our Lord was not of those who have practised such a discipline as this. There was in Him that large liberal humanity which accepts all human powers and feelings as instruments which can be used at once, without any special preliminary discipline, in the service, in the creation of spirit. There was in Him nothing of the somewhat unwholesome asceticism which suspects the body from the outset, which believes it cannot be used by the spirit until it has been first tamed and subdued. To Him the only discipline that was necessary was the discipline involved in using it for particular ends. The true discipline of life was not a subjugation of the body to the soul, but the use of the one life of body and soul in accomplishing the purposes of God. If discipline were to be called subjugation at all, then it was the subjugation of the whole human life, as it expressed itself through the affections of the soul

and the visible acts of the body alike, to the claims of God's spirit. There was in our Lord that healthiest of all human beliefs—the belief that life takes its colour from its aims, that it grows quite unconsciously to a definite character, without troubling to think about its growth, if only it sets itself to live in a definite spirit. That unhealthy habit of always suspecting disease, of always craving for spiritual medicine, was entirely foreign to His view of life. For Him the only way to ensure health was to live strenuously and to trust absolutely the instrument of life that God had given you. The true discipline of life was attained in living it. And so our Lord was never ashamed of bodily needs. He was too unconscious of them, He took them too entirely for granted, to dispute their claims. They were all part of the economy of the human instrument which was called to higher work than that of merely analysing itself and despising the weakness of the elements which the analysis revealed. The body and its needs might be despicable if you could find them living a separate life by themselves. But they possessed no such life. The only life they had was part of the total human personality, and by their share in that they must be judged. And so our Lord never thought of suppressing the body or subjecting it to any special discipline. He used it, and that for Him was enough. If in the desert where food was poor and scarce He had to live sparingly, His body felt the natural result of long privation, "He was afterwards an-hungered."

If the multitudes in their eagerness to hear Him exposed themselves to the same privation of hunger, the first thing that came to His mind was to feed them, the first command to His disciples that came to His lips was, "Give ye them to eat." And so when His body suffered on the Cross, not only from its own pain, but from the pain of His tortured soul, He utters the natural human cry of need, "I thirst."

But there was more than the instinctive cry of pain in those words. There was the appeal of human weakness for help. The greatness of our Lord's nature was never more Divinely revealed than in this appeal for human help. It is only the truly great that can forgive with that last perfect generosity of forgiveness—the forgiveness which begs for help from the wronged. The smaller nature loves to wrap itself in its cloak of false pride and in doing so most effectually proclaims its meanness. It is the hall-mark of the petty nature to refuse a kindness from one who has some time or other offended it. Always suspect that as the meanest prompting of your heart which comes to your lips in the words, "Oh! I wouldn't owe anything to him." The great natures glory in owing anything to anybody, and most of all in owing it to an enemy. For there is nothing which binds a man to your heart like that silent and grateful forgiveness. Let the man who has wronged you feel that you are generous enough to be his debtor and you have disarmed him of the last weapon of his hostile armoury. More than

that, you have made him a humbled and grateful friend. And so it was that our Lord drew men to Him even upon the Cross, grappled to His heart the very men whose thoughtless cruelty had chosen Barabbas in His stead and delivered Him to be crucified. The natural cry of physical pain and physical need called out in those rough natures a sympathy that His great spiritual agony could never have evoked. That, indeed, had only stirred in them a kind of puzzled wonder, cruel by the very mistakenness of its surmise, "Let us see whether Elias will come to save Him." But the cry that they can understand makes them human in a moment. At once they hasten to dip the sponge in the vessel of sour wine which was always set to ease the galling thirst of the crucified, and attaching it to the long reed they raise it to the lips of the dying Lord. And how often in the history of humble human lives has this spiritual ministry of pain declared itself, this kinship of service which it evokes in the rudest heart of man. There is nothing perhaps which draws men together more generally, which more opens heart to heart, than the mystery of bodily suffering. The most callous heart recognises in its presence a spiritual opportunity, the stir of something within him more and greater than he knows. The invisible agonies of the soul would escape for ever, and do in fact escape, all but the most penetrating spiritual vision. But the suffering of the body is the witness that all may see and before which all stand subdued and softened. Over and over again it has revealed

great depths of pity and sympathy in hearts dulled and hardened by rude contact with the world. You will see rough men smooth with gentlest hands the pillow on which the head of the beloved child tosses in pain and go forth to their work with hearts more weary than even the bodies that have known no rest and desired none for nights together. All the kindly ministries of the poor are learned in the hard school of bodily pain. And, indeed, all the highest human ministries have to be learned there first of all. The soul learns its pain in the body's school. After all it is the aching nerve of sense, of thwarted desire, of unsatisfied longing, that reveals to the soul its own division, its capacity of spiritual pain. Here more than anywhere else the body and the soul are one, or rather integral parts of a life that is greater than either. They concur in all spiritual revelation, in all spiritual ministry, in all spiritual growth.

And so far from depreciating the body, we ought to honour it supremely. Even the outer care of the body is the mark of a certain spiritual quality. There is a grace which goes deeper than we know even in scrupulous cleanliness. The man who cares for his body is on the way to care for his inner life also. The man who has a scrupulous sense of duty about the care of his life's outer mask is at least likely to care for his life's inner reality. There is no healthier sign in the life of our time than the universality of what is called physical culture. What the body needs in order that the soul, the life within it, may be sound is the

life of the open air, the natural play of its muscles in good healthy work, the natural rest that is claimed by healthy fatigue. There are few things that could be more confidently named as the guarantees of a simple natural state of soul than these. And above all the body claims honour, because it is quite simply and directly the vehicle of the Spirit or what St. Paul calls the temple of the Holy Ghost. There is in it the stamp of the greatest nobility, the nobility of the patient obedient instrument, the nobility of submission for the sake of service. Far from being the [illegible] implacable foe of the soul's life, against which it must be at every moment upon its guard, the body is the tireless, patient drudge of the soul's will. It bears upon it the impress only of the soul's character. It suffers the burden of the soul's lusts or is glorified by the lustre of the soul's purity. It is condemned to wear openly in the world's face the shame of the soul's secret self-betrayal. And to it again it is given to reveal the inner steadfastness of the soul. Only remember the infinite expression of the human face, the deep ineffable things which only it can say, but which it can say with a certainty that nothing may gainsay; only think how the kindling eye or the play of the hands or the tone of the voice or the instinctive pose of the figure itself can reveal a whole secret world of character, and you will never despise the body which bears in itself that all men may see them the innermost secret things of ourselves. Oh! if we were shut

away in that secret life of the soul from all self-revelation before the eyes of others, if there were no simple, natural body to betray us for what we are, what, alas! might we not become? But the body saves us. It drags us into the healthy reproof of the light, it exposes us to the knowledge of ourselves and of others, it alone makes human companionships possible, it alone drags the soul out of its loneliness and teaches it God's greatest lessons of service and brotherhood. Let us pray like St. Francis for our poor patient brother the life of the body. Let us like him give thanks to God continually for all its intimate and familiar spiritual ministries. Let us pray that the inner secret life of our desires may so fear the naked sincerity of the body which frankly reveals all it knows that it, by the body's ministry, may gradually attain to a true devotion to and a sincere acceptance of God's will. Let us pray that no secret guile may ever lurk in the hand with which we grip the hand of our friend, in the eye with which we look into his, in the word by which we pledge to him the sincerity of our thought. God help us always to honour the body and so to grow in depth and power of spirit.

"It is finished."

It is the cry not of release but of victory. Not "It is ended," but "It is accomplished," "It is achieved." *Consummatum est.* How well it might

have been the cry of exhaustion, the contented sigh with which the weariness of pain sinks into the swoon of extinction. As life withdraws from the agonized body, as the fight of tenacious nature flags and fails, there seems to be left only a great desire for the end, an anxiety that the inevitable may accomplish itself speedily. But natural as that last submission of weakness and despair may be, it was not the feeling that drew from our Lord's lips the great cry on the Cross, "Consummatum est." No, rather in Him at that moment life rose to its supreme height of knowledge and power, and the long vista of the mission which His life had been spread itself out before Him in all the triumphant certainty of its eternal value, of its acceptableness to God. He Who a few human minutes before had quailed for a moment in doubt in the darkness of a great desolation now saw revealed in the last flicker of the light of life the consummate victory that it had been.

What was the secret of this vision? By what Divine insight did the certainty of victory come to One Who died amid the apparent wreck of every hope He had cherished, of every dream He had dreamed? How did He see that all His hope was really accomplished, that every dream had become reality? You say, because He was God. But that does not explain anything. In Jesus God was discovering Himself, coming to the knowledge of Himself, on the terms of human life. It was as a man gets to know himself in the great trials of experience, as he proves himself against

the oppositions or through the ministries of earth —it was so that Jesus had to prove Himself, to come to the knowledge of even His Divine nature and His Divine accomplishment.

And perhaps the thing which most helped Him in that last moment of insight to see the certainty of His victory was the sense of correspondence between His mission and His person, the feeling that He Himself and His work were one. It was because it was given to Him in the last flash of self-knowledge to know that He had actually become what He had always striven to become that He was so sure also in spite of all appearances of the real success of His mission. He went back in thought over all the long past of His soul's straining, and He saw His mission grow step by step with His own growth. He saw Himself as He brooded in long days of joyous labour under the clear Syrian sky over the spiritual weakness of man. He saw the strength of God grow in His own heart and purpose, and, as it grew, the hope grow along with it of planting that strength in the heart of men, of teaching them that it was only within that they could know and become one with the eternal purposes of God. He saw the day when He left the hills of Galilee behind and dedicated Himself amid the waters of Jordan to the great emprise. He saw the days of self-proving in the wilderness. The assault of the great Temptation returned to Him, and the memorable and decisive victory over self by which He put aside for ever the use of any spiritual means but those

of God's patience and God's love, by which He learned definitely that spirit cannot be forced save to its own undoing. He saw the gathering of the first-fruits of His Divine knowledge in the power by which He drew souls to Himself, and in drawing them helped them to make themselves. He saw the beginnings of the fell struggle with the Pharisees, with the representatives of a faith in the external action of God, in spiritual force as God's weapon, in unintelligent and slavish obedience as the means of man's salvation. He saw the mystic sacrament of the Transfiguration in which there came to Him the certainty of His oneness with all God's prophets, with Moses and Elias, the certainty that He and not the tradition of the law and of rigid external Pharisaism represented the true spirit of their teaching. He saw the growing certainty of His Messiahship come to Him in nights of lonely prayer and moments of a great healing power over the wounded souls and bodies of men. He saw the day when the daring witness of a disciple made His certainty of His nature and His mission doubly sure and produced in Him the conviction that it was a revelation not of flesh and blood but of the Father's judgment about Him. He saw the growing tumult of a world that could not understand Himself or appreciate His mission as yet. He saw again the fell fury of the storm burst about His set and fixed resolve. He saw with aching soul the spiritual crisis which had shaken the imperfect faith of those He loved, those He had longed to strengthen. He saw His own

torturing knowledge of the betrayal, the denial, that were coming. He saw again the terrible, implacable agony of the guilty souls. He saw the passionate remorse, the eternal despair, of the turbulent soul of Judas as He went out in the darkness to His lonely death—the type of unutterable human desolation. He heard the tears of Peter as his heart burst before the vision of his shameless cowardice. He stood silent once again in the angry ring of the Sanhedrim. He stood silent before the futile adjurations of Pilate, of the man who thought that life might well be purchased at the cost of all that makes life real, of the man who could fling away a human life as a sacrifice to the needs of a guilty peace. He ascended again the Via Dolorosa. He turned once more eyes of silent gratitude upon the Cyrenaean who relieved his aching shoulders of the gall of the Cross. He felt the dividing asunder of soul and body in the sharp, intolerable pain of the bound arms, the nail-pierced hands and feet. So in a moment life comes back to us, one swift, complete review as of a panorama unrolled before our eyes, they tell us, in the presence of death. And the certainty that came from it all to the soul of Jesus was that He had grown nearer to the Father's heart with every step of the way. The days of defeat were revealed to Him as the days of His real attainment. Amidst the clash and ruin of foundering hopes, this one thing stood out clear, that He had been completely true to the Divine Nature within Him, that He had accomplished God's Nature at least in His

own soul. It was that that gave Him the certainty of victory in that last hour. The mission which had become clearer and clearer to Him with every day—*that* could not have failed, since its pursuit had brought Him nearer to God. Then He knew that He had really attained the power of redeeming the world, since He had redeemed God's Nature utterly in Himself, had not allowed one fragment of its wholeness to suffer loss through any defect of His will or error of His heart. It is only when our mission is the full expression of ourselves that we can have any confidence in its success. Men have before now left the most imposing results of their life-work behind them. They have seemed to succeed beyond measure. And yet perhaps all that they have done must break up and disappear when God applies to it, as He does some time or other to all human accomplishment, the tests of His spiritual analysis. But every expression of human sincerity will last for ever. It may change its form, but its fruitfulness will never be exhausted. It is character that persists finally in this world of God's, and character only. To build up that in one's self, to help others to build it up in themselves, is to make the Kingdom of God grow, and that is the only pledge and means of its growth. It was because Jesus had penetrated to the ultimate spiritual secrets of the Kingdom, the manner of its growth, the certainty of its laws, and because in His own life even more than in His teaching He had revealed them to men, that He was so sure that His work was accomplished, that He could

cry with such victorious confidence, "Consummatum est." It was His life that reconciled spirit and matter, the secret motive out of which action springs and the action itself, the character of the soul's desire and its result. It was He Who showed that an evil soul cannot work good deeds, however good they may seem to be. It was He Who showed that a selfish or a cruel or a tricky motive must leave its inevitable mark upon the action which it inspires. It was He Who showed that Divine results can only come from the desire of good, the sincere devotion to good. He revealed, in short, the great immutable law of spiritual cause and effect. And so it was that He could die in the presence of ruined hopes, with not one visible trace of accomplishment on which to feast His glazing eye, and yet be certain with the certainty to which even the limited spirit of man can attain that His mission had succeeded, that He had done completely the work that God had given Him to do, that His life would be the spiritual sustenance of His brothers to the end of time because it had itself gained for its own eternal possession the Divine substance. God help us to live in the spirit of Jesus. God help us to pray always that we may see more and more clearly the Divine methods, the Divine spirit of action, that can alone lead to the Divine result.

"Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

THERE is no word that we so frequently misuse as resignation. We talk of resigning ourselves to the inevitable as if it were a grace. And yet the moment we say inevitable we mean something which we would have avoided if it had been only possible. We think so often of the will of God as something which restrains our wills, not as something which fulfils them. Yet we can never begin to know the secret of life until we have learned in some degree to get a more certain hold upon all that is enduring in life through every encounter with changing circumstances. Our experience of change and loss must become for us a fulfilment. It is hard, it seems sometimes impossible, for us thus to grow in depth and intensity of life through what seems to rob it of its joy and spring. Not all the philosophy in the world will console us as we gaze with the hard dry anguish of unutterable loss on the dead face from which so lately shone the love that made life rich and warm. We may be resigned but it is the resignation of a crushed and defeated spirit. We may say it is the will of God, but at least it is a will which has broken us, not a will which has made us greater than we were. Yet think of every instance that the Gospel records of our Lord's meeting with death—the daughter of the ruler, the widow's son, His own beloved friend. As in a grand symbol He recovers the fulness of life out of that palsied clutch of death. Through the hollowness of death He can speak to life still, He can make it answer,

He can recall it to resume its hold upon the things of sense. He weeps over the departed friend as you or I would weep. But it is only for a moment that the natural sense of loss overpowers Him. The great faith in the eternal reality of life which He had learned so hardly, learned in the midst of the many temptations to forget it which beset men because they are men—that faith stirs in Him again victoriously and life answers to it across the great gulf. And it is by that faith that He is able to face death so calmly himself, that in death He knows He is not submissively yielding to the decrees of an alien will, but entering into more assured union with the will that has been always really His own. Death is the crisis of life's fulfilment. It is the last throe of self-expression before the self touches the universal Life. One at least among the sons of men had learned the secret of this high mystery of death. One was able to say quite simply, naturally, when death came:—"Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." And how entirely the faith that spoke in those words was justified! For it was the spirit which the dying Jesus commended to His Father from the Cross that has ever since convinced the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, that has kept the spark of God's fire alight in its shivering heart, that has sustained many a soul amid the darkness of life and the gross darkness of death. It is not easy, it will never be easy, to hold so close to God, to the Real Life behind all the shows of life, that death may be for us the glad consciousness

of ultimate nearness to Him. But that life that went out so confidently from the pain and darkness of the Cross into the eternal light has at least made it easier for us. May we learn from Him so to live that when death comes it may not settle upon our spirits with the sombre fear of irredeemable failure but exalt them with the glad expectancy of eternal touch with the real life which will redeem them.

Easter Day

"Omnia pereundo servantur, omnia de interitu reformatnur."
—TERTULLIAN, *Apologeticus.*

Easter Day

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above."—*Colossians iii.* 1.

The fewest words and the simplest are best on Easter morning. And they ought to be an immediate affirmation of practical faith. No spacious argumentation has place here, no parade of historical proofs, no elaborate appeal to a faith of the past to save us from our own present faithlessness. We are seriously told by religious teachers to-day that our first duty as Christians is to equip ourselves as historical critics and sift the evidence for a certain alleged manner of our Lord's resurrection, that if we cannot honestly profess ourselves satisfied with that evidence then we must forthwith cease to be Christians, lose all our religious faith and hope, and condemn ourselves to a materialistic view of life and to an ultimate despair of anything eternal in its constitution or destiny. Apparently we cannot be honest if we keep the faith of Christendom without passing a satisfactory examination in historical evidences, or presenting an irrefutable thesis establishing the truth of some not very clearly defined range of historical fact.

Well, for some of us it is still impossible to treat the Gospels as the proceedings of a first-century Psychical Research Society. For us Easter is the faith that Christ is risen, that in His death He found Himself, found the eternal

significance and reality of all He had been, that through the grave and gate of death He entered into eternal and perfect union with God, and through that union with God is now and for ever one with all that is eternal in human life, its supreme source and creative spirit. For us it is a necessary act of faith, an act of faith almost as necessary and instinctive for the spirit as is the act of breathing for our lungs, that Christ must have risen, that He could not be holden of death. For our faith holds that life is deathless in so far as it works with God, feels with God, wills with God, has already its certainty of eternal values in itself. It knows that it is not expressing a merely personal purpose, that it is not working for merely personal ends, that it is not resting in merely personal satisfactions. It is sure, with a certainty which it does not gain from outside but which is given in itself, in its own vital commerce with God, that an eternal purpose is working in and with its purpose, that an eternal end is being somehow subserved by its activities, that the satisfaction into which it enters is a satisfaction of needs which are felt by God and the whole world of spirit. And the life of conscience, of conscious dependence in all our activities on God, does not need to support its faith by a minute investigation of certain historical problems of the Gospels. It finds in the Gospel as a whole the figure of One Who was its own supreme type and fulfilment. Its faith that that Perfect Life of Conscience could not be holden of death, that there was nothing left in it which

belonged to the order that death can touch, is immediate and unshakable. Christ is risen.

But that Easter faith must come nearer home to us. It is not fulfilled for us till we know ourselves risen with Christ. It is in the here and now of every passing generation that the resurrection is fully accomplished. It is not of a moment in time, but of all time. Our faith in it is vain if we are yet in our sins, if we live contented with the life of selfish aims, of mean activities, of petty satisfactions. It is vain if the eternal has not come to be the soul, the conscious directing purpose, of all we do and are. It may seem an impossible claim. The things we do are of such paltry significance that it seems but a gratuitous self-deception to idealise them on any plane of values which can be called eternal. We are grubbing in offices among files of dusty papers, manipulating with a mere mechanical skill meaningless arrays of figures at the dictation of an unseen will. Or we are ourselves the dictators of that life of daily routine for thousands of our fellow-mortals. We are selling behind a counter or buying in front of it the myriad little necessities of daily life. From morn till eve we spend our days ministering to a multitude of petty needs, our own or others.' Our whole care is centred on the infinitely little, whose sum makes up the only magnitudes we know. How, we think, can such things find any place in a system of eternal values? How can they matter to God? It is our own innate sense of the eternal, fitful and inadequate as it is,

that fills us at times with an utter weariness of these things and brings home to us their essential insignificance. We dream at times fond dreams of deliverance from the vulgar prosaic burden of them all. We cherish visions of an order in which they will be unnecessary, in which every human toil will have become magically interesting. But is it the case that we need such deliverance? Is it not a certain vulgarity in our imaginations that is seeking the refuge of an imaginary order from the real world in which we must find the measures of eternity if we are to find them at all? For think of the real scope of these simplest duties. They are part of a real order which is building up the human temple, which is laying deep and wide and strong the physical foundations on which it rests, which is strengthening its walls with cement of blood and tears and sweat of body and soul that within those walls the great spiritual ministries may endure. Without these necessary labours that sustain man's body and all his bodily needs, that give those needs perhaps a greater scope and urgency with each generation, where would be the growing triumphs, ardours, enjoyments of his spirit? I know well how his spirit has striven and strives to-day for the things that endure, how it has witnessed to them and witnesses to them to-day, with a very minimum of either demand or satisfaction for the needs of the body. Yet what we call civilisation is an element in all corporate spiritual growth. The increasing mastery of nature is a triumph of spirit and a contribution

to spirit. And if the growth of civilisation at its lowest, of mere material mastery, means an increased specialisation of our human functions, an apparent disintegration of human interests, let us remember that it is not really so, that we are really engaged in making a civilisation at its highest, an increased spiritual mastery. If we cannot find the eternal values in these minutely specialised tasks, it is because we have lost or have never acquired the generous imagination which is a native need of the active soul.

> "Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws,
> Makes that and the action fine."

It is a shallow optimism which trusts that the right will come. The optimism of faith is the optimism which believes that right is here, here, perhaps, oppressed and distorted and overborne by a thousand accidental forms and forces of wrong, here fighting for its life, for room to breathe and shake itself free of the mass of wrong that oppresses it, yet here with the pledge of ultimate victory in its natural foothold and in its essential constitution. That is the faith in the risen life, the faith that the eternal is here, that in our most ordinary activities we are inevitably its instruments and only come to ourselves as we become its conscious and most loyal ministers. It is the faith that all that we do can and does create eternal values. But it is more than that. It is the faith that what we do reveals its most immediate effects in what we are becoming. There, in the inner world of character, the eternal is already ours. Whatever

the outer result of our activity may be, the power that it makes is of eternal moment to the world. The world, we feel, lives by its soul, and our character is of its soul. For that soul of the world is always in the making. True, the very central point and essence of that soul is changeless. It makes and is not made. It is God and the eternal world of spirit. But out of that centre grows for ever an ever-widening circle of spirit which has to make itself out of the power it draws from thence. And of that circle and nearest to its centre is human character, the actual souls of men. And all the life of that world of spirit is eternal, that which is in the making equally with that which is unchangeably itself, that which is in the making because it can come to be only in so far as it is rooted in and nourished by that which is. Religion through every variety of change has held to that inveterate faith. It is that faith native in man universally, abiding in him against all the might of appearances, that makes man naturally a religious being. The faith has been always the same, in its crudest form as in its most refined and developed, the faith that in whatever man is doing he is working out for and in himself an eternal hell or an eternal heaven, an eternal discontent and self-torture or an eternal satisfaction, the faith that the issues of life are declared in the quality of life and that those issues must somehow be eternal because that quality is immediately felt by us as eternal. That is the reason that faith in the Risen Christ depends upon no laborious mar-

shalling of historical evidences, but in an immediate native certainty of the soul. Being what He was, what the Gospel reveals Him to the dullest, He could not be holden of death. Man's faith in himself proclaims that Christ is risen and that we must be risen in Him or else we are not yet in any satisfying sense ourselves.

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